TELOS

Number 69 Fall 1986

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FRIEDMAN — *Moscow & Beijing, Together Again?*
HOHENDAHL — *Habermas on Modernity*
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Introduction

Critiques of liberalism are a dime a dozen. With every generation they come in and out of fashion like changing lipstick colors. This does not mean, however, that all is well in a context of perennial cyclic crisis alternating liberalism and conservatism. As Siegel shows in his account of liberalism's recent authoritarian involution, the latest developments mark a sharp departure from some of the better American political traditions. Specifically, the disintegration of pragmatism as a result of the Vietnam fiasco and racial strife in the 1960s contributed to the concretization of what were at least latent anti-democratic tendencies into a procedural elitism oblivious to substantive realities and the human dimension. It is not surprising, therefore, that an ideological mish-mash such as neo-conservatism could succeed the way that it did in the 1980s to dominate American political life. Far from being over, this predicament is likely to continue, notwithstanding all the failures of the Reagan Administration —at least as long as liberalism remains as bereft of ideas and visions as it now is.

A similar situation obtains in European social theory where apparently the only common ground German and French theoreticians share is their anti-humanism and their rejection of philosophy of consciousness. The result is, on the French side, a trendy post-modernism unable to provide anything beyond a stultifying self-deconstruction helpful only to flagging academic careers, while Habermas' post-critical theory, rendered politically gun-shy by the Nazi experience, desperately hangs on to a lame formalistic rationalism in the vain hope of warding off Leverkühn's fate. In his examination of Habermas' *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*, Hohendahl examines the theoretical differences between the two sides from the perspective of a careful analysis of convergences and differences. Yet, it is unlikely that present debates between modernism and post-modernism have any significant socio-political consequence beyond the re-legitimation of a quasi-objectivistic discourse that the counterculture of the 1960s failed to obliterate.

This predicament, understandably, extends to new concerns with ethics —the academic "default option" when all other socio-political issues run out of gas. Here also there has been a tendency toward formalism and proceduralism at the expense of the earlier substantive concerns of Horkheimer's and Adorno's original Critical Theory. In spite of the numerous, and by now well-known, shortcomings of clas-

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sical Critical Theory, at least the focus was clear and the issues brought into the discussions vital. For this reason we publish in English for the first time Max Horkheimer's *Materialism and Modernity*, originally written in 1933 and inexplicably left out by the collection of Horkheimer's essays *Critical Theory* by the American editors who were more concerned with cash-flows than with crucial issues. In a detailed introduction to this essay, Torpey locates the issues historically as well as within the content of present debates.

On a different topic, Friedman discusses the present status of USSR-China relations in light of recent developments. Taking Roy Medvedev's recently published book on *China and the Superpowers* as its point of departure, Friedman exposes the work's pro-Soviet apologetic bias and goes on to clarify what is actually at stake. Given the present configuration of international power relations, he concludes that it is unlikely that much will change in the the foreseeable future.

As the Reagan revolution approaches its underwhelming finale, the culture industry continues to cruise on the neo-conservative bandwagon by glorifying the inescapability of an upscale American way-of-life. Yet, in order to assert the Nietzschean permanence of an eternal return of commodities, Hollywood has to revise its own history and retract its past as a purveyor of the counter-culture of the sixties. Zavarzadeh explores this tension between the ideological insistence on the impossibility of change and the real historical transformation of ideological strategies in the case of Albert Brook's *Lost in America.* The film lends itself well to this sort of scrutiny since it sets out to rewrite and invert the legacy of *Easy Rider*. Zavarzadeh is consequently able to underscore the smug conservatism of the yuppie generation, forced to live down its past and suppress its erstwhile visions of the future. Of course, such a reading of the film runs the risk of deproblematizing the sixties in order to damn the eighties, since even the Reagan presidency does not turn *Easy Rider* into an attractive political program. Nevertheless Zavarzadeh's note provides a compelling description of an important contemporary cultural development; the extraordinary success of the culture industry in the past — including its promotion of the counter-culture — forces it to invoke an artificial negativity, images of a more aggressively consumerist life style: dropouts with credit cards.

Proof of the dwindling difference between high and low culture in late capitalism can be found in Comay's dissection of Rorty, where she locates a conservatism identical to that which Zavarzadeh finds in Brook's film. Hollywood's finest and the best and the brightest of aca-

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demic philosophy turn out to be two sides of the same conversation in which nothing new can ever be said. For Rorty does not know what 'success' would mean except simply 'continuance,' since no values or norms can be asserted, except those which just happen to be there. Or, as Rorty would have it, the values which are, accidentally, "our" own. In a rich montage of citations, Comay exposes the terminal conservatism in Rorty's version of relativism. Of course, Rorty's goal has to do with freeing philosophy from any foundationalist discourse, be it a Marxist materialism or a Habermasian universalism. For Comay the problem is not relativism as such, but the specific choices Rorty makes in order to continue western philosophy despite its contingency, which he understands so well: the denigration of any effective criticism, the assertion of a conventional identity, and the loyalty to philosophy despite himself: a performative contradiction if there ever was one, but does he care? Ultimately Rorty becomes a paradigmatic example of an effete radicalism, current in the universities, that flaunts its rejection of traditionalist cultural positions but refuses to identify, let alone call into question, institutional structures or real social practices.

Gonzales takes a look at another, equally disappointing, version of intellectual radicalism in the new journal *Tikkun* —a self-proclaimed organ of progressive Jewish thought. The first issue was highly eclectic, and Gonzales distinguishes among the more and less convincing essays, but he directs his attention to the confused project of the journal as a whole. Its progressivism appears highly problematic, drawing largely on New Left nostalgia and cliches, while the Jewish component is thoroughly incoherent, mixing adamant traditionalism with neo-assimilationism. One is left wondering about the motivation behind the journal which lacks any substantive program, any intellectual or political agenda that could address real issues of social change or American Judaism today. Abstract liberalism, even with a religious spin on it, does not get very far, as long as it lacks a genuine socio-political content.

The urgency of articulating such a content is evident in the exchange between Whitebook and Gonzales, part of the on-going controversy on "redemption" which commenced in *Telos* 63. At stake are alternative understandings of the legacy of radical social criticism: for Whitebook an exhortation to an expansion of democracy, as the completion of the project of modernity; for Gonzales, highly skeptical of abstract programs, a critique of bureaucratic capitalism with an eye to substantive democracy and community. Our age is marked by a resurgence of neo-fundamentalist positions hostile to the Enlighten-

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ment: *Tikkun*'s retreat from secular liberalism may be one example, as are Rorty's denunciations of universalist principles. In this context, one necessarily sympathizes with Whitebook's critique of absolutist positions and his defense of the "project of modernity." Whitebook expresses legitimate fears regarding regressive anti-modernism, it is odd that he trots out the new social movements as positive examples of nascent democratization, since as even his mentor Habermas knows, they are often the carriers of a virulent irrationalism: conservative ecologism, the mystical "spiritualism" of parts of the women's movement, and the antimodernism in some "alternative" life-styles.

In this context one wishes that Whitebook would have spelled out the content of the "project of autonomy" in greater detail. As it stands now, his position is susceptible to all the criticisms of formal democracy. But this is a topic — the relation between procedural and more substantive forms of democracy— in need of further discussion.

In the review section Luke dissects O'Connor's *Accumulation Crisis* and, under the fancy new wrappings, finds the same old orthodox Marxism trying to resurface. Metaphysical equivalents of the "law of the falling rate of profits" reappear with the benefit of cultural analysis to rekindle the old faith in the class struggle. In the end, however, the whole effort is but another documentation of the disintegration of the Left.

This phenomen is even more evident in the next review of Negri's pretentious attempts at re-interpreting Marx's *Grundrisse*. Had Negri not attained the stakes of semi-sainthood within some of the more scatterbrained sectors of the international Left, this book would have been laughed out of every publisher's office without a second thought. As it is, another incomprehensible tome on applied Marxology comes to pollute further the already overfilled stacks of university libraries. An attempt to deduce a possible apology for terrorism out of Marx's *Grundrisse*, the book could have been best served had it been ignored altogether.

The situation is almost reversed in the case of Sartre whose work has recently fallen in disrepute as a result of the resurgence of academic *bricolage*. There simply is no longer much patience with totalizing intellectuals. But, as Mahaira-Odoni shows in her review of Boschetti's work on *Les Temps Modernes*, the professional or the expert will never be able to displace the kind of figure that Sartre cut. Thus, she predicts a revival of interest in his work as soon as the present re-professionalization of thought will have run its course. Adelson, Rochlitz and Ulin close the issue by respectively discussing the rise of the Ger-

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man novel, the correspondence of Ernst Bloch and postmodernism.[1]

Russell Berman and Paul Piccone

1. In *Telos* 68 we unfortunately failed to acknowledge David Pan for his fine translation of Christa Bürger's essay on "The Disappearance of Art: The Postmodernism Debate in the U.S."

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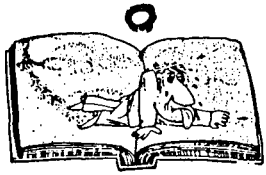

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Is Archie Bunker Fit to Rule? Or: How Immanuel Kant Became One of the Founding Fathers

Fred Siegel

Until the mid 1970s, pragmatism reigned as the "almost... official philosophy of America." European critics charged that James' and Dewey's pragmatism was less a philosophy than a "method of doing without one."[1] But pragmatism's loose and democratic emphasis on problem-solving suited the unbounded American personality with its optimistic faith in persistent progress. Dewey's pragmatism was at once so democratic and informal in its emphasis on shared methods of rational inquiry that Bertrand Russell once accused him of "being unable to distinguish between the work of a scientist and that of a bricklayer." Pragmatism was so central to America's sense of itself, noted a widely-read 1950 Amherst College pamphlet on "Pragmatism and American Culture," that to question its merits was to place "American civilization itself on trial."

When, in the late 1960s, an America racked by Vietnam and racial hostility was dragged before the bar of liberal opinion, "Amerika" and the "amoral" pragmatism which guided "Amerikan" policies were indicted for moral bankruptcy. The "can-do" spirit of Deweyite social engineering embodied in Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" crashed against the barriers of seemingly unbridgeable racial hostility at home and an implacable North Vietnamese foe abroad. The time between the 1965 Watts race riots and American withdrawal from Vietnam in the aftermath of Watergate was, for many American liberals and their children, a period of impending apocalypse. For them, America had lost the ahistorical birthright that had endowed the country with a self-evident sense of its own inherent goodness and invincibility. The concurrent crises of foreign policy, race and cul-

1. Eric Goldman, *Rendevous with Destiny* (New York, 1977), p. 123.

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ture subjected the nation's institutions to an intense criticism that revealed the often ugly disparity between professed principles and actual practices. Vietnam, said David Bazelon, was "that great occasion when the American people gave up on infinity, turn(ed) inward, and observ(ed) themselves with a delayed loathing." As the old foundations crumbled it seemed as if everything would have to be thought through again.

The television networks devoted almost all their coverage to disaffection on the Left, but criticism of the old pragmatic order was as common-place among American conservatives. Like their left-wing counterparts, right-wing youth disdained the soft society of welfarism with all its compromises and government paternalism. They complained of a "sickness in our society" and looked to "restore inner meaning to every man's life in a time too often rushed, too often obsessed with petty needs and material greeds." For "movement conservatives" it was Nixon's catch-as-catch-can policies that symbolized the failure of unprincipled politics much as Lyndon Johnson had served that role for liberals. Early in the Nixon presidency, his speech writer William Safire received a request from H.R. Haldeman, later of Watergate fame : "Few seem aware of Nixon's political philosophy. The President feels that this general subject... would be worth some work and effort by our PR group. Would you please follow up?" "Strange," Safire responded, "fitting a philosophy to the set of deeds, but sometimes that is what has to be done." The lack of a consistent perspective allowed Nixon to engage in the "spectacular" economic and diplomatic departures which earned applause at the price of conservative resentment. Nixon's support for a guaranteed minimum income bill (which failed congressional approval) and "détente," and his sharp reduction in spending on military hardware led a prominent group of conservative intellectuals to publicly announce that they were suspending support for the administration. All this happened well before Watergate and the roaring, Nixon induced, inflation of 1974-5. Commenting on the pragmatic activist style of governing which led Nixon at one point to declare himself a Keynesian, *The New York Times* noted: "Seldom in Western politics ... has a national leader so completely turned his back on a lifetime of beliefs to adopt those of his political opponents."

Politically, the Johnson and Nixon presidencies produced McGovernism and Reaganism. Intellectually, they not only discredited pragmatism, they also recreated the all but forgotten division be-

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tween liberalism and democracy which had last appeared in American life in the 1930s.

Early liberals like Bentham, Kant, and the French physiocrats were far more strongly attached to "enlightened despotism" than to a democracy which they associated with mob rule. The tension between a liberalism representing more or less the bourgeoisie's support for the rule of law, limited government and free markets, and the democratic emphasis on mass political participation, which often had radical overtones, is familiar to Europeans. In short, it is the difference between how one is ruled (liberalism) and who rules (democracy).[2] Both the French Revolution of 1789 and the European revolutions of 1848 were made possible by an alliance of the middle and the lower class against the old aristocratic order. But once in power, the alliance foundered because of the bourgeoisie's fear of the propertyless "mob." Thomas Macauley, for instance, argued that popular sufferage was a threat to the very existence of property and thus civilization. Democracy, he argued, would allow the poor to use their votes to "pillage" the rich.[3] In a parallel vein, John Stuart Mill, in many ways the patron saint of America civil libertarians, saw the "common herd" as a threat to the aristocracy of intellect. The power of the majority must be "tempered," he argued, "by respect for the personality of the individual and deference to the superiority of cultivated intelligence." For Mill the proper order of things, as he expressed it in a letter of 1829, is that "the intellectual classes lead the government and the government leads the stupid classes."[4]

In America, the property owners' fear of the mob, generated by Shay's rebellion, is built into the very structure of the Constitution. Prior to the great reversals of the late sixties and early seventies, generations of left-liberals bemoaned the anti-majoritarian underpinnings of the Constitution. They criticized the elaborate division of power, the fragmentation of sovereignty designed to thwart active majorities. Madison, writing in Federalist 63, defended representative rather than direct democracy because it permitted "the total exclusion of the people in their collective capacity" from any share in the government. Similarly, Federalist 51 argues that since "society itself will be broken into so many parts, interests and classes of citi-

2. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York, 1976), p. 263.
3. Anthony Arblaster, *The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism* (Oxford, 1984), p. 265.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 278, 9.

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zens... the rights of individuals or of the minority, will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority."

In practice, however, the tension between classical liberalism and democracy was muted by the broad distribution of property, particularly in land, which served to soften the class dimensions of the split. In the 1930s, the day-to-day suffering of masses of the population breached the logic of limited government. Roosevelt, speaking on behalf "of the will of the great majority of the people," insisted that some of the prerogatives of property, as enshrined in free market liberalism, had to give way to the discretionary powers of an activist government empowered to relieve the conditions of mass suffering. "We have always known," said FDR, "that heedless self-interest was bad morals; now we know that it is bad economics."[5] Roosevelt coupled technical expertise with populist rhetoric. The concentrated power of the New Deal state, guided by academic expertise, was legitimated by the proposition that government was acting as individuals could not on behalf of shared purposes and common ideals.

The tension between liberalism and democracy was the one of the underlying political themes of the 1930s. Critics of the New Deal like former President Hoover and journalist John T. Flynn, an old Progressive, charged that FDR's version of state-centered liberalism was a nefarious attempt to create collectivism under a liberal label. For Flynn, the New Deal theme of pursuing Jeffersonian ends by Hamiltonian means was merely a clever subterfuge. The state, even a purportedly benevolent one, Flynn insisted, was still the enemy. In his second inaugural address, Roosevelt responded to the charge that a powerful government, legitimated by majoritarian sentiment, was a threat to liberty. Self-government, he argued, did not depend "upon the absence of power ...The Constitution of 1787 did not make our democracy impotent." With "one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished... the people's representatives in government," he insisted, "had to serve as trustees for the whole people."[6] For the New Dealers the active state was to be the concrete embodiment of a collective generosity, of a mutuality and fraternity which were part of a shared nationhood.

According to Roosevelt, it was not the state but unfettered capita-

5. Edgar Kemler, *The Deflation of American Ideals: An Ethical Guide for New Dealers* (Seattle, 1967), p. 69.

6. Arthur Ekirch, *Ideologies and Utopias: The Impact of the New Deal on American Thought* (Chicago, 1969), p. 198.

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lism which posed a threat to personal freedom. Turning the rhetorical tables on Hoover, he called for a "broader definition of liberty" than that "under which for many years a free people were gradually being regimented into the service of the privileged few."[7]

Roosevelt's talk of majoritarianism and shared nationhood held out the promise of incorporating the new immigrants into the American fold. For his harsher and sometimes nativist critics it implied a surrender to alien European ideas and, looking across the Atlantic, even fascism. But for his more sophisticated detractors such as Walter Lippman the issue was, in principle at least, neither the attack on the privileges of business nor the idea of a shared nationhood, but rather the majoritarian threat to the supremacy of law.

The New Deal's threat to the liberal ideal of government limited by law was symbolized by Roosevelt's 1937 attempt to pack a Supreme Court. The court had repeatedly struck down New Deal legislation on the basis of a theory of substantive due process which gave special protection to one form of minority rights: property rights. "There, behind the safe earthworks of natural law, due process and minority rights," bitterly commented the young Max Lerner, "the judges can in the plenitude of their virtue and sincerity, veto and outlaw the basic social programs of the majority."

Lerner insisted that a liberalism based on minority rights would of necessity become a form of minority rights rule. There were, he said, three facets to this rule: "a defense of minority rights (including both human and property rights) against the possible tyranny of the government, and a belief in rationalism and the final triumph of the idea." The laissez-faire version of liberal rationalism Lerner described was given its most articulate defense by Friedrich A. Hayek. Written against the backdrop of Fascism and Stalinism, his brief book *The Road to Serfdom,* published in 1944, had a simple message: activist government in general and planning in particular "leads to dictatorship," even if, as with the New Deal, they are the product of democratic majorities. Hayek insisted that the preservation of freedom in an age of mass tyranny depended on limiting the discretionary power of even elected officals. The alternative to dictatorship, elective or otherwise, he argued, was to limit the claims of government through "The Rule of Law." So for Hayek, "government in all its actions is (to be) bound by rules fixed and announced beforehand."

7. Ronald Rotunda, *The Language of Liberalism* (Iowa City, 1986), p. 68.

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Denounced as a reactionary tract, it became a best-seller and produced a wave of angry counterblasts from New Dealers. The most noted critique was Herbert Finer's *Road to Reaction*, a book-length refutation which began by asserting that: "...*The Road to Serfdom* constitutes the most sinister offensive against democracy to emerge from a democratic country in many decades."[8] It was a measure of the changes to come that thirty-five years later Theodore Lowi, a leading left-liberal critic of the welfare state, found it "a mystery as to how *The Road to Serfdom* could have been considered a reactionary tract." Lowi picked out for particular praise the section in the book on "The Rule of Law."[9] Delayed for more than a quarter century, the victory of "rationalism and the final triumph of the idea of laissez-faire" Lerner had feared, arrived in the 1970s with the collapse of pragmatism and the totemization of "law" in the form of a liberal version of substantive due process.

In 1978 Hayek, by then the 1974 Nobel prize winner in economics, wrote an article entitled "The Miscarriage of the Democratic Ideal." It began: "It is no longer possible to ignore that more and more thoughtful and well-meaning people are slowly losing their faith in what was to them once the inspiring ideal of democracy." Democracies, said Hayek, were forever the playthings of intensely organized interest groups who through logrolling created temporary majorities to further their own narrow interests. The result of this political free-for-all was that there was no overall rationale for government policies, no way of judging the merit of the various claims put forth by competing groups.[10] "Unable to satisfy all interests but lacking a principle by which to distinguish among them, policy decisions" in the New Deal State were inevitably incoherent.[11] The upshot was that private power determined public purpose. The way to restore coherence, said Hayek, is to scrap the pragmatism of political problem-solving and return to a principled reliance on market mechanisms.

Hayek was an enormously influential figure among American conservatives, but even more striking were echoes of Hayekian ideas among American liberals. In the early 1950s, at a time when liberals

8. Herbert Finer, *The Road to Reaction* (Chicago, 1963), v.

9. Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States,* 2nd ed. (New York, 1979), p. 300.

10. Friedrich von Hayek, "The Miscarriage of the Democratic Idea", *Encounter*, March 1978.

11. Steve Newman, *Liberalism at Wits' End: The Libertarian Revolt Against the Modern State* (lthica,1984), p. 162.

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still placed their hopes on an activist presidency, American conservatives supported the Bricker Amendment — a failed attempt at a constitutional revision limiting the presidents war-making powers. In 1973 liberals tormented by Vietnam passed the War Powers Act designed to limit those same presidential powers. Their reasoning had a Hayekian flavor. Just as liberalism in domestic policy was incapable of distinguishing between marginal and essential claims to government support, American foreign policy makers had, in the case of Vietnam, been unable to distinguish between central and peripheral American interests. Their solution was to limit the discretionary powers of the Presidency. Henceforth, so it was asserted, the War Powers Act would insure that the Commander-in-Chief's options were clearly limited by law. Hayek addressed the same point by arguing that : "To leave the law in the hands of elective governors is like leaving the cat in charge of the cream jug —there soon won't be any, at least no law in the sense that it limits the discretionary powers of government."[12]

If for Hayek the market was the alternative to legislative and executive misgovernment, liberals turned to the courts as an alternative source of authority. The political pluralism and interest group liberalism of the Rooseveltian state was, according to Lowi, inherently corrupting. "Interest group liberalism," he said, "posseses the mentality of a world universalized ticket-fixing. Destroy privilege by universalizing it."[13] What was required, said Lowi, whose 1969 *The End of Liberalism* was to have an enormous impact on anti-statist intellectuals of the New Left, was juridical democracy. By juridical democracy, Lowi, who was a major influence on David Stockman in both his left and right wing phases, meant government-based not on the discretionary judgement of elected officals corrupted by pork-barrel pragmatism, but on the logic and precision of carefully crafted and binding formal rules.[14]

The presidency, said Charles Beard, is "the dark continent of American constitutionalism." But by the early 1970s it was not only the presidency but all of government which seemed to be enveloped in "the heart of darkness." The Great Society and Nixonian activism produced an anti-government sentiment which was not so much conservative as populist in the sense that the complexities of politics

12. Friedrich von Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty,* vol I, (London 1973) p. 31.
13. Lowi, p. 297.
14. In his memoirs Stockman speaks of heaving wielded "a sword forged in the free market smithy of F.A. Hayek."

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were perceived as a smokescreen for the big interests left and right that were out to screw the little guy. This populist anger was reflected in the growing number of Constitutional amendments designed not so much to limit the power of government as to limit the prerogatives of officialdom by promulgating new rights. From 1928 to 1962 Senators and Congressmen introduced an average of 65 proposed constitutional amendments per year. Between 1963 and 1968 that figure rose to 320 per year and since 1969 that has grown to an average of 532 a year. But not only have the numbers grown, the nature of the proposed amendments has changed as well. Some are the traditional procedural proposals such as the one requiring a balanced budget, but increasingly whether from conservatives or liberals, they are "rights"-based proposals on issues like school prayer or equal civil standing for women. And even the numerous proposed Constitutional amendments designed to limit the government's power to tax and spend were expressed in the language of rights —in this case the right to protect one's property from government interference.

On a state level, the model for these "reforms" was Governor Reagan's 1973 California ballot initiative that limited the state's taxing power. Supporters of the initiative argued that the process of democratic representation in the legislature had been so corrupted by the power of special interest groups that the people's representatives could no longer be entrusted with the powers of taxation. The 1973 Reagan tax reform initative was defeated only to later succeed in another version in 1978 as the celebrated Proposition 13 which provided strict rules governing the amount of taxes that could be collected.[15]

In 1933 Roosevelt, surveying the costs of the depression, could exclaim that "Our common difficulties concern, thank God, only material things."[16] With Prohibition on the way out he was freed from the thicket of a politics dominated by intractable moral issues. But Vietnam and even more importantly the issue of civil rights returned moral conflicts to the center stage of American political life. For perhaps the first time the country was confronted not with a religious pluralism, to which it had learned to adapt, but with the shattering of common values and the emergence of a moral pluralism as well. In the absence of shared values, politics either degenerated further into

15. Gary McDowell, "On Meddling with the Constitution," *Journal of Contemporary Studies*, Fall 82.

16. *The Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (New York, 1983), vol. 2, p. ll.

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a cynical process of "vote buying" or it produced conditions of near cultural civil war over issues like abortion or school busing for racial integration.

With the loss of a common moral framework, Hayek's proposals to uncouple the state from issues of distributive justice seemed to provide a way out of the resentments and hostilities of the Nixon era. The state, insofar as it was allowed to act, would be restricted to what Kant, one of Hayek's intellectual mentors, called universalizable propositions. That is, it would be reduced to "securing the general legal and procedural rules for capitalist enterprise."[17]

Madison molded the constitution to protect property from temporary state level majorities. But for Hayek and his disciples liberalism is always threatened by majoritarian democracy so long as the principle of self-interest so unambiguously revered in the economic sphere is allowed to define politics as well. In order to make liberalism permanently safe from democracy, Hayek proposed to improve on at least some of the Founding Fathers with a new model Constitution. He called this new form of government "demarchy" to describe a Kantian society ordered only by "abstract and universally applied rules of conduct."[18] But neologisms aside, Hayek's formalistic scheme has a very Hamiltonian ring.

Like Hayek, Hamilton wanted to insulate his legislators from the pressures of party and interest-group politics by freeing them from the accountability of elections. In Federalist 71 Hamilton explained that although the "people commonly intend the Public Good" they do not "always reason right about the means of promoting it." So he proposed to combine reason and power in the role of a monarch: a "superior intelligence beholding all the passions of men without experiencing any of them," and a senate representing the large property holders elected for life. For his part, Hayek proposes to safeguard the people from their own worst instincts by allowing each citizen to vote only once in his life, in the year in which he or she turns forty-five and then only for lawmakers elected to one-time fifteen year terms. The primary duty of these lawmakers, these "superior intelli-

17. Raymond Plant, "Hirsch, Hayek and Habermas: Dilemmas of Distribution" in Ellis and Kumar, ed. *Dilemmas of Liberal Democracies : Studies in Fred Hirsch's Social Limits to Growth* (London,1983), p. 53.

18. Hayek was only one of a number of of scholar looking to constitutional revision. James Buchanan, the 1986 Nobel prize winner in economics, a leader of the free market "rational choice school," which argued that the market choices were inherently more democratic than selections made at the ballot box, called for a "constitutional revolution" in American society.

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gence" who are to combine power and reason, is to create and maintain the general rules governing all. To further protect the lawmakers from the contaminations of thoughts that are less than good and univerally generalizable, their efforts at lawmaking are strictly separated from the works of another assembly whose task is solely to administer policy. The consequences of separating principle from policy, suggests Hayek modestly, will be "the dethronement of politics." Henceforth, if this can be believed, self-interest will be confined solely to economic life. A disdain, even a hostility for mass politics had long plagued the Republican party. Born of resentment toward the new immigrant masses, that disdain reached a fever pitch in the 30s as "that man" Roosevelt pandered, as they saw it, to the nation's Tammany tendencies. Hayek's arguments should have reinforced that Republican weakness, but they did not. Nor, in the short run, did the Republicans suffer from that other traditional failing, the tendency to argue Hoover-like in the name of abstract ideals as a means of avoiding concrete problems. The authoritarian implications of Hayek's arguments, for instance, whether in leaving the worker unprotected against the power of his employer or in regard to government, were plain enough to see. One of the acolytes has gone so far as to argue that "an authoritarian form of government may sometimes do better from a liberal standpoint than a democratic regime, provided that the governmental authorities are restricted in their activities by the rule of law."[19] This was exactly the sort of position New Deal Democrats had once feasted on. But the Democrats were unable to make political hay of the Hayekian tendencies in the Republican Party because on their side of the political/conceptual aisle liberal intellectuals were busy fashioning a similarly anti-majoritarian perspective.

Goethe is supposed to have said that the whole world appears to be a gigantic madhouse when seen from the heights of Reason. But one need not have ascended to those heights in the early 1970's when John Rawls' pathbreaking left-liberal tome *A Theory of Justice* was published to feel that American life was fundamentally askew. In the words of that archtypical liberal columnist for the *New York Times*, Tom Wicker, in 1971 "life has broken down." The very promise of post-war America seemed to have turned in on itself; affluence instilling alienation, abundance generating pollution, the power to defeat Hitler producing Vietnam. Writing in a similar period of

19. The rule of law argument is an example of the sometimes willed liberal blindness to the reality of force and coercion.

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apocalytpic fears just after WWI, Paul Valéry spoke of how "...the foundations of our world have been shaken, something more essential than the replaceable parts of a machine has worn out."

Rawls had first come to public attention with his higher law defense of civil disobedience on the part of Vietnam protesters.The draft resisters disobedience to duly constituted law reopened the issue of just what was legitimate authority. So despised by critics of Vietnam was Nixon, that his election in 1972 by a vast majority served only to further discredit the idea of majority rule as the legitimate basis for governmental authority. "Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?" asked an anti-war English professor quoting Lear. "And the creature runs from the cur? There thou mighst behold the great image of (Nixon's) authority: a dog obey'd in office." Writing about Vietnam, David Bazelon captured the spirit which motivated the social protest movements of the 60s. Speaking in the voice of the educated reformer, he wrote: "We are a great society, or we are nothing any of us can bear to think of. A great society must entertain great projects. If we are not going to rule the world, then we must remake ourselves." But how?[20] McGovernism presented itself as the political path to America's redemption. The overtly political legacy of McGovern's failure to achieve that redemption has by now been well discussed. Journalists and scholars have analyzed the movement of silk-stocking Republicans into the Democratic column and the exit of blue collar Democrats deserting their ancestral home. Somewhat less studied but nonetheless by now long familiar is the neo-liberal trail that began in the post-defeat study groups looking for new ideas into middle ranks of the Carter administration and on to Hart's presidential campaign.

But what happened to that pressing need to remake America? The answer in short is that with the failure of majoritarian politics those sentiments were largely displaced into what can be called "legal liberalism," the attempt to create what might be considered a legitimate foundation for the Republic outside of the electoral process. The new thinking, based in part on the arguments for selective conscientious objection developed in response to Vietnam, dismissed the idea that Americans might be bound together by a sense of community or nationhood and focused instead almost exclusively on individual rights grounded in variations of natural law. In other

20. This need to remake ourselves produced a revival of interest in political philosophy. See Peter Singer "Philosophers are Back on the Job", *New York Times Magazine*, July 7, 1974.

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words, due process, displaced the "Great Society."

In the 1920s Walter Lippmann concluded his anti-majoritarian polemic, *The Phantom Public*, with the hope that "the maintenance of a regime of rule, contract, and custom" would keep the masses in check. "But in the years thereafter," writes Arthur Schlesinger, "what began as a functional necessity " became by the 1950s "a transcendental faith" employed "to abolish the very pluralism which orginally produced it." Lippmann's invocation of due process grew into a form of natural law, "a universal order on which all reasonable men were agreed."[21] Fuller presented a similar though more sophisticated argument which has been described as "procedural natural law" based on a Kant-like ethic of obedience to just rules. The problem with both arguments is that the transcendent procedures designed to produce normative order were all too obviously a transposition of the author's substantive values into procedural terms. Natural Law legalism, noted Shklar, was an escape from politics, an attempt to replace the give and take of public life with a set of veridical truths.[22] Kantian proceduralism was a marginal music in American intellectual life until the decay of Deweyism gave it an operatic opening.

The philosophic basis for redefining liberalism primarily in terms of the legal procedures by which we should be governed rather than in terms of who we should be governed by and for what common ends came in the 1970s from Rawls' writings. Rawlsianism was the hidden intellectual legatee of McGovern's crushing defeat. Philosophy, or more typical for the period, consciousness raising — albeit of a refined sort — was enlisted to do the work of politics.

Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* published in 1971 "has sparked off more argument among philosophers, and has been more widely cited by sociologists, economists, judges, and politicans than any work of philosophy in the past hundred years."[23] Stuart Hampshire, reviewing *A Theory of Justice* for *The New York Review of Books* described it as "the most substantial and interesting contribution to moral philosophy since" WWII. He noted that: "However highly regarded by academics, scholarly works in moral and political philosophy" are rarely reviewed in the major publications. But Rawls' received rave, lead

21. Brian Magee, *Men and Ideas*, p. 150.

22. Judith Shklar, *Legalism: Law Morality and Political Trials* (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 7, 108 .

23. "John Rawls" by Alan Ryan in Quentin Skinner ed., *The Return of Grand Theory in the Human Sciences*, (Cambridge,1986), p. 101.

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reviews in *The New York Review of Books*, *The New York Times Book Review*, and *The Times Literary Supplement*. *The New Republic* described it as "an indigenous American masterpiece" and it was enthusiastically greeted by reviews in *The Economist, The Spectator, The Nation, The Listener, The New Statesman, The Washington Post, The Observer, The Times Higher Education Supplement*, and others.[24] And at least five full-length and themselves widely reviewed books were written to either emend or refute *A Theory of Justice*.

Philosophically innovative, within a Kantian tradition alien to America during the triumph of pragmatism, the book's broad success derived not from its originality — many of its arguments had been anticipated in Charles Reich's far less rarified *The Greening of America* (1970) — but rather in the way in which it provided a firmer foundation for what had become the conventional left-liberal ideas of the period. Peter Caws, writing in the then unabashedly liberal *The New Republic*, put it plainly in a review entitled "Changing Our Habits": "Now if they are up to it, American statesmen have... a philosopher of their own to read. If they were to actually read him, they would recognize standards of justice to which they have long paid lip service; if they were to take seriously what he says, they might even begin to put them into effect."[25] It is doubtful whether too many politicans read Rawls directly, but then they did not have to because their young aides and advisors were. The "Rawls industry," as it has been called, suffused the college curricula of the 1970s. And in the law schools it was "hard to read a legal treatise... without finding him mentioned two or three times... any academic or learned discussion contain(ed) the almost obligatory reference to Rawls."[26] That is because he provided a new vocabulary of discussion whose writ ran so deep and wide that it came to "be used even in criticism of its own arguments."[27] A 1982 annotated bibliography on the response to Rawls focused on only "the more significant publications relating to Rawls' work." It ran 683 pages.

Rawls' aim, he tells us early on, is to work out a theory of justice that represents an alternative to utilitarian thought. The problem with utilitarianism or Benthamism, as it is sometimes called, is that in promoting "the greatest good for the greatest number" it threatens to violate our individual rights. Put simply, utilitarianism could

24. Introduction to *Reading Rawls*, ed. Norman Daniels (New York, 1974).
25. Peter Caws, *The New Republic*, May 13, 1972.
26. Magee, p. 245.
27. Ronald Dworkin, "Social Contract", *Sunday Times*, London, July 9, 1972.

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in theory justify the killing of an innocent man if it furthered the sum total of human happiness. This is possible, says Rawls, because utilitarianism, even in its most sophisticated forms, refuses "to take seriously the plurality and distinctiveness of individuals."[28] This failure violates a fundamental principle of Kantian justice: it denies that individuals are ends in themselves but rather allows one person to be used to advance the well being of others.

All very well and good, but hardly a revelation. Americans, brought up believing in inalienable individual rights, know this in their bones. Utilitarianism has never struck very deep roots in America. Bentham the Englishman reviled the Americans and denounced their doctrines of natural rights as so much "bawling upon paper."[29] As for the Declaration of Independence itself, Bentham described it as a "hodge-podge of confusion and absurdity." And by and large the feeling was reciprocated. American pragmatism made war on both Kant and Bentham. Then why the fuss? Two reasons. First as a treatise rooted very much, as one admirer put it, in "the realities of contemporary politics," the attack on utilitarianism was implicitly understood as the higher criticism of Nixon's silent majority. And, secondly rather than arguing for the means to an alternative majority, Rawls was clearing the way for a new conception of government and society rooted solely in individual rights — rights that served as a trump to the common well-being as defined by an America incapable of upholding its own professed ideas.

Rawls' problem was in his own words to find "the archimedean point" outside of society on which to base those procedural natural rights. His solution was to place his faith in *reason* in much the manner of the late 18th century utopian William Godwin, who had been inspired by the French Revolution, and whose 1793 *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* similarly lit up "the firmament of reputation" so that, in William Hazlitt's words, "no one was more talked of ... no work in our time saw such a blow to the philosophical mind of the country." Like Rawls, [t]he author of *Political Justice* took abstract reason for the rule of conduct." Both men place "the human mind on an elevation, from which it commands a view of the whole line of moral consequences; and requires it to conform its acts to the larger and more enlightened conscience which it has thus acquired." Life, in short, was to be an emanation of a particular version of *reason*.

28. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge,1971), p. 29.

29. H.L.A. Hart, "Bentham and the United States of America," *Journal of Law and Economics,* vol.19 (1976), pp. 555, 6.

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And reason would have no truck with institutions like the family or decentralized government hallowed only by time-worthiness. The devout rationalist "absolves man from the gross and narrow ties of sense, custom, authority, private and local attachment, in order that he may devote himself to the boundless pursuit of universal benevolence." He continues, "[g]ratitude, promises, friendship, family affection give way... that the void may be filled up by the disinterested love of good and the dictates of inflexible justice, which is the law of laws, and the sovereign of nations."[30]

Rawls' *law of laws* is rooted in an Americanized rending of a Kantian moral Newtonianism. That is, it is based on Kant's desire to use *reason* — as opposed to a Baconian interplay of fact and theory — to give human rights a grounding as solid and irrefutable as that Newton had provided for the physical world. "Since Newton," said Kant, "the comets follow geometric orbits."[31] "Rousseau," he goes on, is the "Newton of the moral world," for, unlike the empiricists who derive their ideas from mere experience, Rousseau the essentialist has made the "great discovery of our age" that man must be defined not according to what he is but what he ought to be.

Rousseau tell us he is interested not in "facts" but in seeking "the rights and basis of society" in the higher law which is to serve as the "universal voice" of man's possibilities. This "universal voice," this *General Will* is a product of individual wills which are capable of being unified if each of us suppresses our individual interests to act as generalized civic beings concerned only in the common good. In Kant's words: "Act so that the maxim of thy will can always at the same time hold good as a principle of universal legislation."[32] Justice then, which is Rawls' concern, would consist of a world in which one man is not forced to obey another but one in which all are commonly subordinate to the general will of which they are a part.

Rawls presents these ideas not in the language of Rousseau and Kant but in terms of the Lockean social contract with which Americans are familiar. More importantly for his reputation among academics, he presents them with extraordinary technical brilliance. His social contract consists of a thought experiment designed to serve as the analogue to the Lockean state of nature. The analogue is

30. William Hazlitt, "William Godwin" in *The Spirit of the Age* (New York, nd), p. 26.

31. This brings to mind Marx's comment on "the man who thought water flowed uphill since the discovery of gravity."

32. Ernst Cassirer, *Rousseau, Kant, Goethe: Two Essays* (Princeton, 1947), p. 32.

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what Rawls calls "the original position." In order to create the higher law, he asks people in "the original position" what "principles we would choose to govern our society if we were to choose them in advance, before we knew the particular persons we would be — whether rich or poor, strong or weak, lucky or unlucky — before we knew even our interests or aims or conceptions of the good." People would make their choices behind what Rawls called "the veil of ignorance". The people of the "veil," said Rawls' admirer, Ronald Dworkin, "suffer from the most crippling kind of amnesia... these amnesiacs nevertheless must agree on a political constitution."[33] The point of precluding specific information is to guarantee that the parties — these generalized civic beings of Rousseauean provenance — all have an equal bargaining position so that none can try to stack the rules on behalf of their own interests. Like Hayek who was also preoccupied with the distortions produced by the power of social interests, Rawls uses the original position to generate a set of rules that are binding and because they are equally applicable to all, they cannot be used to convey special privilege.

Traditional liberalism defined people in terms of their allegiances to communities and causes, and like pragmatism, it defined justice in terms of outcomes. But for the free spirits, the "unencumbered selves" of the sixties drawn to the atomistic world of the Rawlsian ideal, the individual was in Rawls' words the "self-originating source(s) of valid claims."[34] And justice was defined in good Kantian fashion not by substantive results but by proper process, independent of the outcomes. In sociological terms, Rawls argument was consistent with the shift from the means-rational world of pragmatic social science to the values-rational world of ultimate ends. Where the older liberalism was based, in part, on the moral density of community and reciprocal obligation, the aquarian individualism of "pure procedural justice" precluded value judgments about an individual's choices in so far as the occupants of the original position, i.e., a raised consciousness, were blocked from making distinctions lest they in turn would be discriminated against. So that, for all the spilled ink, the outcome of Rawls' "moral geometry" was no different from a utilitarianism unable to distinguish between "push-pin and poetry."[35]

33. Magee, p. 246.

34. Michael Sandel, "The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self," *Political Theory*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1984, p. 87.

35. There is an element of mock struggle in the academic pitched battle between utilitarians and deontological, i.e., Kantian liberals. In many respects, their

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Rawlsianism, in short, provided the intellectual underpinnings for the fascination with process to the exclusion of results that came to characterize not only political liberalism — consider the Democrats' endless fiddling with the rules to ensure "fairness" — but almost all liberal institutions which spent the better part of the decade in internal procedural wrangling. For all of Rawls' ingenuity in using the "original position" as a justification for moral libertarianism, his theory would have been far less noteworthy had he stopped there since libertarians had long come to similar conclusions by teasing out the anarchic overtones of Lockean individualism. What made this work so promising and powerful is the way in which Rawls linked a free market in morals with justifications for government intervention on behalf of economic equality.

Liberalism's common-sense notions of fairness asks whether people receive the full benefit of their labors. People, so the Lockean argument goes, are entitled as a matter of natural right to that which they produce by the sweat of their brow. American radicalism traditionally focused on Locke's labor theory of value and insisted that workers receive their just deserts while asking if the bosses were not getting more than their fair share. If there were differences in income that was legitimate insofar as all were fairly rewarded for their efforts. But Rawls, like Chrisopher Jencks, whose influential book *Inequality* was also published in the early 70s, attributes differences in income not to effort or character, but rather to luck. "No one," says Rawls, "deserves his place in the genetic lottery, the distribution of native endowments, any more than one deserves one's initial starting place in society. The assertion that a man deserves the superior character that enables him to make the effort to cultivate his abilities is equally problematic; for his character depends in large part upon fortunate family and social circumstances for which he can claim no credit."

If our differing fates are solely a matter of chance, then we can have no absolute claim to what fortune has brought us. Private property rights, he argues, following a path already laid out by Reich in an influential law review article, are a matter of convention, not merit or natural right.[36] Thus, our talents and skills should be considered

similarities far outweigh their differences. Both claim an authority capable of commanding assent quite independent of how a culture views things. Both deny the importance of community and custom, substituting rationalist rule governed behavior organized by the professional overseers of the administrative state.

36. Charles Reich, "The New Property," *Yale Law Journal*, no. 73, April 1964. Reich's article was cited in a series of a cases which established the vested rights of recipients of government benefits.

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as part of a common pool of resources, a pool whose assets should be divided according the principles of justice as defined by Rawls' "difference principle". This principle asserts that inequalities in wealth are to be allowed only insofar as they benefit those who are worst off. In "justice as fairness," says Rawls, men agree to share one another's fate, "and ingeniously they do so out of self-interest since forced to choose from behind the "veil of ignorance" people would insist on the "difference principle" knowing that it would guarantee them a certain standard of well being.

Whatever one thinks of *A Theory of Justice*, and the problems with the arguments are legion, the reader has to be impressed with the audacity and imagination which has bound together a radical individualism through "the original position" and economic collectivism thorugh the "difference principle." It was the kind of marriage bohemian radicalism had long dreamed of but never before been able to put on a strong argumentative footing. So long as one was willing to walk along with Rawls on his treadmill of abstraction it appeared that the philosopher had shown how the seeming oxymoron "an open community" was possible.

For those willing to read Rawls as other than a prophet there were critics early on who argued effectively that his attempt to fold liberty into equality was largely a case of verbal eugenics. How can a disembodied self choose its deepest values? What does it mean to share the fate of others, i.e., have a communal sense of justice, when there are no communities in Rawls' paperscape? Even his use of Kant was inconsistent. The Kantian injunction that no man should be used as a means to another's ends, so important for establishing the right to unbounded personal preference, was abandoned for the "difference principle," which does precisely that. The contradiction went largely unnoticed because it was both a reflection of and a higher order justification for the tendency of post-war liberalism to swing wildly between philosophical extremes. Rousseau, who also embodied what he was describing, exclaimed that "[m]y tastes and thoughts always seem to fluctuate between the noble and the base," or in other words between the sovereignty of desire and the sovereignty of detached reason. The rebellions of the sixties which swung similarly searched for the absolute authority of new gurus even as they proclaimed the need to "do your own thing."

Like Rousseau, the sixties liberals faced with their version of the *ancien regime*, a regime which produced Vietnam and racism, were forced, as had been their 18th century forebearers, to challenge arbitrary authority. But the liberal attack on illegitimate authority, when

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unrestrained by the sense of prudence and philosophical skepticism associated with Anglo-Scotch and American intellectuals, creates a set of twin problems familiar to the French. It either attempts to recreate a new and legitimate form of absolute authority that we might call beautiful authority, as did Rousseau with his idea of the General Will which so inspired Kant and Rawls, or it lapses into an anarchist denial of all forms of authority. Neither are compatible with representative democracy.

Modern society is divided between a romantic private life and a bureaucratic public sphere, but that split is alleviated in part by family and associational ties which bridge the gap. But for many in the sixties it was precisely those ties of family, church and neighborhood that were seen as the source of the nation's problems. Rawlsianism exhibits a similar hostility to those intermediate institutional forms. Like utilitarianism it is designed for a society of strangers. Its radically individualist thrust has only two elements: a mass of isolated individuals who enter into a contract with each other and the state which enforces the contract. For Rawls society is the relationship of each individual to the law; individuals have no non-contractual relations with each other.

Rather than always being contradictory, the two poles — represented on the one hand by the individual or the state and on the other by either cultural relativism or legal absolutism — often tended to reinforce one another. Socially, it was precisely the faith in the power of a state-directed social science technocracy to provide for all our material needs that allowed Charles Reich's bell-bottomed swinger to indulge in the illusory search for personal liberation while assuming his economic well-being was assured. Administratively bureaucratic protections would serve to cushion individual self-seeking. The outcome was the two-headed monster — one head of which offended almost everyone — Bureaucratic Individualism.

Bureaucratic Individualism — vesting the state with responsibility for the individual's material well-being while freeing individuals from accountability for their actions — should be understood as a persuasion, as a set of mental habits which superseded but did not entirely displace the older mix of majoritarian and social science liberalisms. The two co-existed like the levels of a layer cake, each tier composed of succeeding decades of the liberal mind. On one level, we can see the change as a shift from the socially overdetermined world of Social Science Calvinism to the willed sociological naiveté of Rawls' philosophical hothouse populated solely by hypothetical individ-

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uals. But both seem driven by a desire to deny that which is known intuitively by their compatriots, that our common well-being depends in large part on our individual characters and vice versa.

The origins of modern American social science are found in the attempt to free men from the incubus of the Protestant conscience. Left naked before his god, the individual was held solely and totally responsible for his fate. Radicals and liberal reformers — whether of the social, gospel or social science variety — saw quite rightly that the emphasis on individual responsibility was more often than not used as a mask to justify exploitation in an increasingly interdependent society. What sense does it make to hold an individual accountable for his unemployment, they asked, during a downturn in the business cycle? But what began five generations ago as a fight against a morality of social control eventually hardened into its own orthodoxy. The plight of the individual was placed in a social context only to be later dissolved into that context. God's death was followed by liberal reformers with the death of the virtuous individual in which what had once been the moral personality was reduced to a collection of appetites, as the individual was fully relieved of responsibility for his or her actions.

This description, of course, telescopes a long-term change. In the New Deal phase, as it was popularly understood, the point of government intervention to reshape the structures of life was precisely to allow character to be developed and rewarded and not to eliminate it. This is an understanding whose residual legatees were among those who defected from the Democratic Party in the 1970s. But the promise of rationalism was to so redesign the world as to eliminate the need for personal virtue. Rawls' mental structures do the same work as the technocrats' social policies: they eliminate any meaning ingful notion of individuality even as they continue to free the individual from his old moral burdens. Virtue and justice are something that is supplied by an intellectual elite rather than being the concern of responsible men and women with a mutual interest in their common fate.

To have character is, according to the word's Greek origins, is to be "marked deeply," something Rawls amnesiacs need not fear. Rawls in fact is afraid of good character.[37] He's careful to place "a definite limit on the strength of social and altruistic motivation" for fear that it undercuts his plan to create justice by imposing a Kantian schema.[38]

37. Rawls, p. 281.
38. Ben Barber, "Justifying Justice" in Norman Daniels ed., *Reading Rawls* (New

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"Virtue," as Lincoln Steffens put it, was to be replaced by "intelligence." Once liberating, this was by the 1970s an idea which had long gone from ripe to rotten, so that in the words of the Talmud, the man who thinks wisdom is greater than virtue will lose his wisdom.

William James, ordinarily a most charitable man, decried the superficial knowledge Kantians derived from their logical exercises, exercises that shut them off from the world of experience. Kant's philosophy, said James, was sterile, "the rarest and most intricate of all possible bric-a-brac museums." The aim of pragmatism, he argued, was not to eliminate rules but to draw those rules into an engagement with results. Harsher yet, John Dewey described Kantianism as the "logic of fanaticism" and, somewhat unfairly, ascribed WWI to the German philosophers' malign influence. Kant's intentions aside, Dewey argued with some justification that the legacy of philosophical absolutism was political absolutism. Committed like James to a vision of communities struggling to order themselves democratically, Dewey critically equated the German idea of freedom with obedience to the Kantian imperatives.[39] Dewey's excesses aside, the Kantian legacy, as has often been pointed out, served to waylay as much as inspire the growth of Democratic traditions in Germany. Kant's own sympathies for enlightened absolutism and emphasis on the need "to rule autocratically" should have given Rawls' enthusiasts second thoughts.[40] But true to the formalism of the faith they professed, proceduralists have by and large been concerned with the logic to the exclusion of consequences.

The weaknesses of the Kantian tradition is of more than of philosophic interest because through Rawls those weakness exacerbated some of the long-standing problems of American liberalism while creating new ones. If pure procedural justice can tell us how people should order their lives, then what need is there to consult them directly? Rawlsianism provided an intellectual writ for those reformers, those law professors and judges, who like the social "scientists" of the 1950s, insisted that their privileged knowledge entitled them to rule. Moreover, unlike the technocrats, this claim to power was mandated by Constitutional necessity, or so it was claimed. Rawls, they argued disingenuously, as if unable to distinguish between the American and French Revolutions, was what the Founding Fathers had really had in mind.

York, 1974), p. 311.

39. James Kloppenberg, *Uncertain Victory: Social Democracy and Progressivism in Europoean and American Thought. 1870-1920* (New York, 1986), p. 6.

40. Leonard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom*, p. 119.

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Moscow and Beijing, Together Again?

Edward Friedman

Roy Medvedev's new book[1] reflects an important change among ruling circles in the Soviet Union, a willingness fundamentally to transform and improve Moscow-Beijing relations by making concessions to China away from the hard-line stance long backed by Soviet conservatives. Anti-Stalinist historian Medvedev details the assumptions underlying this major redirection of Soviet policy. Even the errors and omissions in Medvedev's important book are illuminating. In contrast to Andrei Sakharov, however, Medvedev's nationalism blinds him from seeing some key China-Soviet Union realities. While Medvedev acknowledges that Brezhnev in 1970 sought United States support for a Soviet attack on China, nonetheless, "the chief part in creating the danger of war on the Sino-Soviet border was played by the Chinese leadership" (p. 55). Yet Medvedev knows that a weak China was no threat to the Soviet Union. He states that Mao had to know that should China invade Siberia and the Far East, then "the Chinese army would be utterly destroyed" (pp. 55-56).

Medvedev's own data, though not his argument, contrasts a military aggresive Soviet Union with a weak China. According to Medvedev, after a border clash "in 1970, Soviet troops were given orders to open massive missile and artillery fire on Chinese territory up to a depth of 10 kilometres. This 'preventive' strike was meant to serve as a warning to the Chinese leaders. Large concentrations of Chinese troops had been fired on and their losses must have been considerable... The Chinese response to the Soviet missiles was to ... [carry] burnt corpses of Chinese soldiers...through the streets...to arouse hatred for the Soviet Union and to underline the 'threat from the north'" (p.50). The carrying of corpses surely did not constitute a threat to the Soviet Union from the south.

1. Medvedev, *China and the Superpowers* (Blackwell: New York, 1986)

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Of course Mao, who invested from the mid 1950s on in nuclear weapons and missiles, also had great power ambitions. He sent Chinese troops into Korea and Vietnam. But his economically irrational policies left China ever further behind the Soviet Union in overall military strength.

What Medvedev, then, as now, slighted that Sakharov stressed was how Soviet ruling groups successfully manipulated racial and historical fears of the new Mongol hordes. Soviet dissidents enthusiastically joined in the debate over how to respond to the "danger of total war with China" (p. 51), agreeing on the need to settle and build up the Far East, to stoke nationalist fires and to increase military spending. Solzhenitsyn advocated a "massive transfer" of people "to Siberia and the Far East...to safeguard those regions from China's claims" (p. 180). Only Sakharov countered, finding that "the inflation of the Chinese threat is one element in a game being played by the Soviet leadership. The over-estimate of the Chinese threat ill serves the cause of democratization and demilitarization that our country so badly needs, that the whole world so badly needs" (p. 52).

For Medvedev, the 1970 Sino-Soviet war tensions following on the heels of the Soviet Union's 1968 armed crushing of democratizers in Czechoslovakia should have made clear to all that relations among Leninist Party states could not be comprehended by theories of socialism or proletarian internationalism. Some people were not enlightened until a decade after Moscow snuffed out the Prague spring, when Vietnam invaded Cambodia and China attacked Vietnam. Nationalistic Leninist states tend to have politically powerful and active military forces.

Medvedev describes Moscow's response to Beijing's two week war in Vietnam. His data is new. Not only did the Soviet Union put its troops on full alert, move tanks to China's border, shell China and repeatedly overfly China (p. 156), but the Brezhnev "government made it sufficiently clear that if China widened its aggression in Vietnam, the Soviet Union would feel compelled to take action of a similar kind in North Korea" (p. 63).

The militarized realities of expansive nationalism in Leninist states were already manifest 20 years before the Soviet reinvasion of Czechoslovakia when Stalin threatened Tito's independence and Hoxha had to worry about Yugoslavia's threat to Albania's national existence. The issue is not mindless expansionism but a self-interested nationalism. In the post WWII period, because of pressing national priorities, both Tito and Stalin abandoned Communist fighters in

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Greece. Also, Medvedev reminds us that at the end of World War Two, "The Soviet Union did not think the advance [of Mao Zedong's armies] into Manchuria [China's northeastern provinces]...was advisable" (p. 14). In fact Stalin refused to help the revolutionary side in China's civil war for fear "the United States would openly intervene on a massive scale...[and make China] a vassal of the United States...[with American] military bases on the Sino-Soviet border" (p. 19). Any study of ruling groups in Pyongyang reveals how North Korea maneuvers to maximize independence of both China and the Soviet Union. One of the few new elements in international relations added by militarized Leninist states is a longer than usual proclivity to expansive, messianic nationalism as successful, armed Leninist rulers try to achieve what they regard as consolidating power, state building, and universal socialist liberation.

The nub of Medvedev's argument on why Moscow and Beijing are getting together again is that the death of Mao Zedong and the arrest of his most militant supporters have removed from power in China such expansive, messianic nationalists and thus opened an opportunity for Moscow-Beijing reconciliation. There is much truth in Medvedev's understanding. In the last years of Mao's life, Mao and his most militant allies were militarily active both in Cambodia and in disputed islands in the Gulf of Tonkin.

Yet true to his uncritical acceptance of Soviet foreign policy in general,[2] Medvedev does not recognize that China has legitimate fears of Soviet military policy, that post-Brezhnev leaders have to move away from the unyielding militarism of the Brezhnev era. Describing Moscow-Beijing tensions as mainly the result of Mao Zedong's politico-ideological need —a need which did indeed exist— to make the Soviet Union a negative target within China's domestic politics, Medvedev slights the impact of actual Soviet military moves which caused deep anxieties for a broad range of Chinese leaders, not just dogmatic Maoist ideologues. The Soviet Union started moving troops to the Chinese border in 1963, a time when China's airforce was weaker than Egypt's. In the post-Khrushchev era, starting in 1965, a major troop, bomber and missile build-up positioned Soviet military forces in a forward-thrusting array. The Soviets broadcast to Chinese soldiers to rebel and also trained the ethnic minority Chinese who came over to the Soviet side for a liberation war.

2. Medvedev's positions on Afghanistan, Cambodia and most other international issues, including the shooting down of the South Korea passenger plane, are indistinguishable from that of official Soviet spokesmen.

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Nomadic minorities in China suffering from the murderous famine of Mao's great leap were attracted by the better life on the Soviet side of the border. Following Moscow's smashing of the Dubcek government in Prague, Brezhnev announced a new doctrine, the right to "liberate," as it had in Czechoslovakia, any nation that left the "socialist commonwealth." Soviet missiles were aimed at China and the USSR's Far Eastern air force practiced for an attack on some unnamed enemy to the south. Soviet rulers debated "whether or not to make a preventive nuclear strike [on China] with the aim of averting the creation of powerful nuclear weapons complexes" (p. 192). Moscow sought Washington's support for this attack on China, thus allowing Richard Nixon to let Mao know that Washington opposed Moscow's aggression and would help China in such an eventuality. Some of the building blocks of Nixon-Mao rapproachement were manufactured by Brezhnev's militarism.

As Arkady Shevchenko recalls the debate over attacking China, Defense Minister Grechko "advocated a plan to 'once and for all get rid of the Chinese threat.' He called for unrestricted use of the multimegaton bomb known in the west as the 'blockbuster'." Chief of the General Staff Ogarkov thought that would mean world war and that even the alternative of using "a limited number of nuclear weapons in a kind of 'surgical operation' to ...destroy their nuclear facilities" would bog the Soviet Union down in a war with China, harming the quest for Soviet military supremacy. Malik, who hated China, was unhappy with Gromyko's vacillating advice to Brezhnev merely to keep the nuclear option open, saying "You have to be tough with those yellow bastards. You can't ever let up."[3]

It was because of this militarism of the Brezhnev era, and not Mao's ideological fixations, even Medvedev acknowledges at one point, that "[f]earing their northern neighbor, the Chinese leaders were seeking allies in the west" (p. 105).

For Soviet rulers, Medvedev tells us, a Beijing-Washington alliance could have triggered a global disaster. It could have sparked worst-case Soviet tendencies. Rulers in Moscow feel a need for power greater than all those arrayed against them. As the original Stalin-Mao pact of 1950 fundamentally changed "the geo-political map" (p. 22), so the normalization of Beijing-Washington relations was a historical turning point, "a classic shift in the system of alliances" (p. 119). Brezhnev so feared a military alliance of the United States of Ameri-

3. Shevchenko, *Breaking with Moscow* (Knopf: New York, 1985), pp. 167-168.

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ca and the People's Republic of China that he felt a need to be tough in invading Afghanistan (p. 124) and in backing the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia to obtain for the Soviet Union air and naval base access in Vietnam. While this apologia for Soviet expansionism is unpersuasive, it is a fact that Soviet troops were taught that the Afghan resistance was mainly the anti-Soviet tool of a joint Sino-American venture.

Medvedev would have preferred that the United States have stuck to the original strategy of Richard Nixon and the advice of George Kennan and go slow in warming relations with China so as to maintain better relations throughout with the Soviet Union, indeed to give rulers in Moscow a reason to maintain an enhanced detente with Washington in order to prevent a true warming of Beijing-Washington relations. In short, Medvedev agrees with Kissinger's view that improved American ties with China would lead to Soviet concessions to the United States. Between 1973 and 1975, however, while China-America relations did not get too warm, the Soviet Union told Kissinger it would restrain Hanoi, while in fact providing it with the weapons for overwhelming the Saigon regime.

In any case, Medvedev's argument is that to preclude a Soviet global military strategy premised on outcompeting America cum China, Moscow must draw Beijing away from Washington. Indeed world peace depends on Beijing-Moscow rapproachement. The "alternative...could be the destruction of mankind" (p. 223). This is not an optimistic reading of the dynamics of Soviet foreign policy making.

Medvedev hoped that Ronald Reagan's unthinking anti-Communism which could not distinguish neo-Stalinism from reform Communism, Reagan's preference for anti-communist ruling groups on Taiwan as elsewhere and his unwillingness — given his focus on Moscow as the source of all evil — to treat China as a singular power linked to third world needs, would alienate China's rulers and facilitate Moscow-Beijing rapproachement. Between 1980 and 1982 Reagan did act just that way. But he learned.

Ironically, Medvedev's view is a mirror image of Reagan's. Instead of the Soviet Union, America becomes the source of all evil. Medvedev neglects to analyze internal forces in China making for rapproachement with the Soviet Union. The most naked power interests of Chinese ruling groups are at stake. The conservatives led by Chen Yun want good relations with a more orthodox, Leninist Soviet Union to help check China's all-out, anti-Stalinist domestic reform-

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ers.[4] The reformers led by Deng Xiaoping want to maximize good relations with the Soviet Union to use all economic factors to enhance China's material development, to permit a relative reduction in military expenses, and to increase independence from the West in order to establish a major position for China in world politics as a non-aligned, socialist third world nation.

Of course, there are also more perverse reasons which led rulers in China to agree on improving relations with the Soviet Union. Vietnam is experienced among Chinese elites as their most hated adversary. Chinese elites successfully risked and sacrificed Chinese lives to contain the American war escalation in Vietnam. In addition a poor China gave $20 billion in aid to the struggle led by Hanoi only to find Hanoi aligning with Moscow in its forward encirclement of China. Rulers in Beijing feel tricked, betrayed and used. Wounded Chinese soldiers from China's short war in northern Vietnam, including paraplegics in wheelchairs, are treated in China with the greatest of respect — if not always the greatest of funding. Throughout Chinese elite circles the idea is warmly received that improved relations with Moscow could strain Moscow-Hanoi relations, make Hanoi less secure in its support from Moscow, and pressure Hanoi to concede to or compromise with Beijing.

China's domestic political situation also furthers the opening by Beijing toward Moscow. China's reformers have been investing heavily to make a success both of the return of Hong Kong as a special autonomous region of China and the development of Shenzhen, Zhuhai and other coastal special economic zones. In delegitimating the economically irrational policies of the Mao era which still leave 100 million people in mountain, border and ethnic minority regions in abject poverty, China's post-Mao rulers insist that more should be done for the distant northern and western poor periphery touching the Soviet Union which stagnated or declined in the Mao era but which, given China's backward transportation system, can hardly benefit directly from coastal development. The opening to Moscow and the rapid development of economic relations with the Soviet Union are, in part, proof in China that the post-Mao regime has not

4. When Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Arkhipov, who in the 1950s administered Soviet aid projects in China, returned at the end of 1984, Chen Yun, the spokesman for conservative Party forces in China, went out of his way to comment on how this was a meeting of people who believed in planned economies, implicitly criticizing both China's market reformers and too much closeness to industrialized market economies of the liberal democracies.

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forgotten the poorest of the poor who were supposed to have been the major social beneficiary of the Leninist state.

With so many factors and forces piled up on the side of a re-opening to Moscow, that policy is irresistable within Chinese politics. There are no major groups in China opposing normalizing relations with the Soviet Union. As if these decisive internal Chinese political forces do not exist, Medvedev gives all the credit to Reagan's ineptitude for getting good Moscow-Beijing relations going (p. 156).

This misrepresentation of Reagan's policy is not an isolated error. Medvedev is an atrocious historian of America-China relations. He gets nearly everything wrong. Medvedev credits only worst case accounts of American action and motives.

On the other hand, Medvedev is a helpful guide to the Soviet side of Moscow-Beijing relations. He tells us, for example, that the magazine *Opusnyi Kurs (Dangerous Course)*, which had been publishing anti-China material since 1969, after the reinvasion of Czechoslovakia, ceased publication with issue number 11 in 1981 (P. 160), and an "Association of Soviet Sinologists was formed in the summer of 1983." (p. 162). Thus Medvedev shows how early even Brezhnev's Moscow positioned itself for reconciliation with Beijing.

As Sakharov wisely called our attention to how much Soviet and super-power demilitarization were linked to getting away from Brezhnev's turning China into a scary monster which legitimated massive Soviet militarization, so Sakharov asked us to focus our attention on how Soviet democratization, or at least moves away from neo-Stalinism and toward reform, depended on a different Moscow relationship with a changed China. This concern never enters Medvedev's calculations.

While Medvedev praises China's post-Mao reform initiatives, he does so in a way which projects more of Soviet history than it comprehends the actual trajectory of Chinese development. Medvedev notes how post-Mao rulers in China have opened wide this reform path, abandoning the emphasis on steel (p. 139) which serves a militarized state, and instead focusing on consumer needs and living conditions. The Chinese critique of Mao and Maoism has been "far deeper ... than the criticism of Stalinism and Stalin ... in the Soviet Union" (p. 120), China has carried out a more "fundamental and extensive rehabilitation" of victims than the Soviet Union (pp. 120-121), and China has instituted "far greater change" (p. 121). It is as if Stalin had died in the 1930's and Bukharin and his colleagues returned to the center of power having learned of the evils of un-

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checked power and anti-human, statist aspirations (p. 175).

As Mao in 1957 was closely linked to neo-Stalinist challengers to Khrushchev in the Soviet Union (p. 30), so one think it is almost natural that reformers in the post-Brezhnev Soviet Union associate with the reform achievements of post-Mao China. Medvedev comments that "China's only mistake was not to introduce the reforms much earlier" (p. 195). He brushes off as ridiculous Soviet Stalinist critiques of China's reforms and concludes that "both China and the Soviet Union need democratization," but not the democracy "of the capitalist West" (pp. 222-223). One wants to believe that this commitment is the basis of Medvedev's assertion that "the general desire to build the just socialist society...brings the Soviet Union and China closer together." (p. 168).

Yet that jargon suggesting that bourgeois democracy is simply a fraud is usually understood by Leninists opposing reformers to mean that nothing should be allowed to challenge the absolute power of the dictatorial Leninist-Stalinist apparatus. Medvedev's language suggests a Soviet appeal, if not for a neo-Stalinist re-alliance with China, then something as close to that as possible. In fact, Medvedev concludes seeing little "liberalization" and even less "political democratization" in post-Mao China. He instead sees China after the death of Mao, like the Soviet Union after the death of Lenin, faced with "the danger of Stalinism" (p. 181). Medvedev has no faith in the staying power of China's reformers or their reforms (p. 213).

What Medvedev misses is how Titoism and then Kadarism, indeed the whole East and Central European reform experience, have discredited both Maoism and Stalinism in the eyes of China's reformers. Mao was not Lenin, who died after his experiment with the New Economic Policies. Mao died as the most extreme and disastrous opponent of such policies.

Mao Zedong, in presenting his communist fundamentalism of extirpating even little tails of capitalism — private plots, petty trade, mom and pop stores, household sidelines, etc. — as the only progressive path to human liberation also confused Titoism and Stalinism, presenting them as one, contending that without Maoism's war on intellectuals, the family, private interests, etc., Stalinism, as Titoism, would lead to exploitative, immiserating and polarizing capitalism. The Maoist assumption was that the Titoist reform path was inherently evil, even worse than pure Stalinism. Maoism, as an orthodoxy, left no space to explore reform communism as a first step in a more liberating direction away from Stalinist

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inhumanities because Titoism was presented as the most evil path possible.[5]

Yet one must not forget that Mao smashed dogmatic Stalinists as well as reformist Titoists. Medvedev conflates the two. Indeed he has nothing to say about the historic struggles of China's reformers, nothing on their political struggle with those advocating Soviet orthodoxies in the 1950s and 1960s, nothing on Deng Zihui who was punished by Mao for opposing Stalinist collectivization in China. Instead Medvedev correctly notes that post-Mao rehabilitations have also returned to some power people interested in "resurrecting political and ideological values and structures in China that are similar to those of the Soviet Union" (p. 175). These, however, are not the dynamic reformers. These are not the people with the political initiative in China today. So while Chinese conservatives might find much in common with their Soviet counterparts and even seek full Moscow-Beijing rapproachement, such a neo-Stalinist entente is not something even a Deng Xiaopeng, let alone a Sakharov, would be celebrating. Nonetheless such cooperation, Medvedev happily remarks, could reduce military budgets and allow ruling groups to expand national incomes (p. 176). It could also further the life of neo-Stalinist forces in both societies.

But Medvedev never builds on his original recognition of the insight of international relations theorists that international politics are significantly determined as a highly autonomous and amoral sphere. In nineteenth century Britain, democracy and imperialism expanded simultaneously. It is likewise just possible that the cause of peace in Asia would be served by a neo-Stalinist Moscow-Beijing rapproachement. The implications of that axis for the anti-Stalinist cause is not investigated. The alternatives are not analyzed. Medvedev does not probe the most provocative implications of his argument.

Instead Medvedev dismisses China's reformers in a condescending manner. He finds them and China incapable of competing for the western textile market (p. 198), incapable of innovating beyond Lenin's New Economic Policies (p. 195), and incapable of absorbing Western high technology (p. 202). One would never guess from Medvedev's contemptuous attitude toward the post-Mao reform initiatives that in the Deng Xiaoping era China has grown more than

5. See Friedman, "Maoism, Titoism, Stalinism: Some Origins and Consequences of the Maoist Theory of Socialist Transition," *The Transition to Socialism in China* (Mark Selden and Victor Lippit, eds.; Sharpe: New York, 1982), pp. 159-214.

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twice as fast as any other Leninist socialist state. Although the Gorbachev regime wishes to exploit the recently completed Baikal-Amur Railroad and Siberian resources to develop the far eastern parts of the Soviet Union by cooperating, in harmony with the logic of an international division of labor, with the economically dynamic areas of the Pacific Rim, from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations through Japan and Australia to North America, China is held in such little regard by Soviet ruling groups that, in devising economic Pacific Rim projects, the U.S.S.R.'s Council for Coordinated Studies of Asian-Pacific Problems virtually ignores China. Medvedev argues that China's reforms must fail, that China, suffering the distortions of a Stalinist command economy plus crushing poverty, will be forced to turn to the Soviet Union "as the difficulties of rapid economic development become China's main national problem" (p. 214).

Hence, for Medvedev, Moscow need not make large political concessions to China. Instead a weak China will inevitably have to accept Soviet-imposed political realities. The Soviet Union need not satisfy China's desire for proof it has abandoned policies of military hegemony and positions of strength. Despite Chinese desires for a neutral buffer, the Soviet Union will not allow its satellite Mongolia to act as an independent buffer as does North Korea. Mongolia is larger than all the following countries combined: East Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Albania and Greece.

Surely Moscow need not fear that Ulan Bator would lean toward Beijing. Ruling groups in Mongolia are fixated on how the much larger number of Mongols in Inner Mongolia, part of the People's Republic of China, have been over-run by the dominant Han people of China. The suffering of Mongols in Inner Mongolia during Mao's Cultural Revolution was extreme. Virtually no building lacked a torture facility. Given the Soviet Union's expansive notion of its security needs, rulers in Mongolia accept some dependence on the Soviet Union as the price of ethnic autonomy.

Representatives of the Soviet Union's Communist Party, however, had long assured their Chinese comrades that Soviet forces were in Mongolia only to keep the country out of the hands of reactionaries. Hence once Mao's Party took power in China, it looked forward to a change in the military disposition of Mongolia which constitutes most of China's northern border. Instead Soviet leaders would not even discuss their policy in their first satellite, Mongolia. They still do not.

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In addition, the Soviet Union will not reduce its Asian military force to the peaceable disposition that existed in the Khrushchev era. According to Medvedev, Moscow certainly will not "withdraw its military support for the regime in Afghanistan" (p. 214) or do anything to lose the access to navel and air bases in Vietnam. In sum, Medvedev, let alone any less enlightened member of the Soviet elite, sees no need for major concessions to China away from the military gains won by Soviet power in Asia in the Brezhnev era and earlier. Leaders in China are expected by Medvedev to continue to normalize relations with the Soviet Union at a cost to Moscow only of little more than symbolic gestures. Medvedev envisions "Chinese manual labour on large building projects in the Far East and Siberia," China buying Soviet industrial products and selling the Soviet Union "consumer goods," in sum, accepting the kind of arrangement that supposedly satisfies Vietnam (p. 220).

Whether such a deal will strike rulers in Beijing as fair or as proof that a Soviet threat no longer exists is doubtful. Nonetheless, Medvedev is right in one crucial regard: Moscow-Beijing normalization should still move forward. Chinese leaders notice that even Ronald Reagan has signed cultural agreements with the Soviet rulers of the evil empire, ended the grain embargo on the Soviet Union, offered to sell the Soviet Union subsidized grain, and negotiated face to face on matters of mutual concern. China's reformers see no need to be more anti-Soviet than Ronald Reagan. Moreover, they want to enjoy every economic benefit possible from normal relations with the Soviet Union. Consequently, they will continue to swallow some national pride to win those benefits. There is every reason to expect further momentum along the path to fully normalized Moscow-Beijing relations.

What is at issue is how far this coming together of Moscow and Beijing will go, especially if Medvedev is wrong and the reform project in China continues to advance and institutionalize its gains. Medvedev does not even consider that possibility. Although China remains today very much a Leninist party dictatorship, the reform group contains socialist democratizers who would explode that Party dictatorship.

Medvedev's argument is simply that, reform or no reform, a new day is dawning in the international relations of Moscow and Beijing. In contrast to Stalin and Mao, by the 1980s leaders in China and the Soviet Union no longer felt the need to discipline and dominate a world Communist movement (p. 172-173). They now accept, ac-

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cording to Medvedev, normal friendship and cooperation each with the other or with an independent Communist Party out of power in Italy or in power in North Korea, Mozambique or Nicaragua. For Medvedev, Soviet *realpolitik* has supplanted a Soviet quest for hegemony over China, and not just China. But Medvedev does not explain how today's Soviet *realpolitik* is different from Stalin's *realpolitik* deals with Hitler, Tojo and Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek).

Since Medvedev's contention is that only Mao's anti-Soviet jingoism ruptured Moscow-Beijing relations, the burden of his case is that, with Mao gone, nothing deep or real now separates China and the Soveit Union. Supposedly Mao first turned the Soviet Union into a scapegoat for China's Great Leap famine and then created border clashes "with the end of the Cultural Revolution" (p. 180). Supposedly Mao's hostility to the Soviet Union was in no way a response to Soviet foreign policy moves challenging China's independence.

Yet Medvedev offers a program of concessions to woo China away from defensive alignment with the United States in opposition to an expansive Soviet Union. Probably reflecting an enlightened consensus within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Medvedev advocates pulling back troops by both sides from the border (p. 160), acknowledgement by Moscow of the legality of China's position on the Ussuri River boundary (p. 184), and a public acknowledgement by Moscow that "many of the treaties which served as the basis of territorial divisions between China and Russia" were "unequal and unjust" (p. 192). That is, these are unequal treaties imposed by an imperialist Russia on a poor, weak and vulnerable third world nation. In sum, Medvedev urges Soviet leaders to take confidence-building initiatives which will lead to the reduction and redeployment of Soviet military forces and "reduce Chinese fears and anxieties" (p. 193).

In 1985-86 Gorbachev began to take such initiatives. They should have a major impact among ruling circles in China because the new Soviet offer recognizes that the principles underlying China's positions on the border have been just. All that remains is for Gorbachev to go a bit further and also check the unyielding, anti-reform, anti-China forces in the Soviet Union which push for continuing overflights and actions that make for border incidents, that won't budge on Soviet military policy in Asia such as the deployment of SS-20 missiles.

Ironically, Medvedev's call for Soviet initiatives reveals, most importantly, the hollowness of his claim that only Mao's irrationality made for the deterioration of Moscow-Beijing relations. In fact,

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Medvedev at one point acknowledges that "Stalin's China policy, and ... his attempt to extend his authority over the Chinese Communist party ... later intensified by Khrushchev's China policy" created rational fears among China's rulers about hegemonistic Soviet ambitions (p. 192). Bad Sino-Soviet relations are not merely a matter of Mao's ideology or a political need for a scapegoat.

One must confront the issue raised by both Tito and Mao of the extent to which the Soviet Union continues Czarist Russia's expansionist policies which have for centuries whittled away the independence of Asian peoples.[6] It raises the question of whether Moscow can treat Beijing as an equal, sovereign state. Or does Moscow require that good relations and presumptive foreign policy harmony, defined as supporting socialism and opposing imperialism, actually mean subordination to Moscow's purposes? The enlightened Medvedev's many silences when added to open contempt for Chinese reform innovations and his unwillingness to criticize aggression in Soviet foreign policy raise doubts about whether less enlightened Soviet rulers have this capacity for an equal relationship with China. To get an idea of how fundamental are these hegemonic tendencies in Soviet foreign policy, one must understand a connected set of historical events, few of which are mentioned and none of which is accurately described by Medvedev.[7] In 1928 the Soviet Union opposed Mao's setting up peasant-based armies since supposedly only

6. For a liberal historian's argument that Soviet Asian policy is a continuation of the agenda of the Russian Czars, see Harrison Salisbury, *To Peking and Beyond* (Capricorn: New York, 1973), especially chapter 19, "The Legacy of Genghis Khan." For a similar argument from an anti-Russian but pro-Stalinist, pro-Maoist perspective, see Jan Myrdal, *The Silk Road* (Pantheon: New York, 1979), pp. 184-220.

7. Medvedev's book also contains scores of errors because of a most unprofessional job of editing. Indicatively, Democratic Senator Henry Jackson appears as Republican Congressman Henry Jackson (p. 108), the Joint Chiefs of Staff as the chiefs of the combined staffs (p. 83), a Department of State White Paper as the white book (p. 79), tertiary economy as third economy (p. 219), Ray Cline as Richard Kline (p. 130), Banning Garrett as B. Manning (p. 112), Stanley Karnow as S. Carnow (p. 111), A. Doak Barnett as Arthur Barnett (p. 153) the powerless U.S.-China People's Friendship Association as the Association for American Chinese Friendship, "a powerful national body" (p. 110), Ohio State University as the University of Ohio (p. 50), etc. The errors on Chinese names are worse: Kang Sheng appears as Gang Sheng (p. 43), Chen Boda as Zhen Boda (p. 97) and the leader of the anti-Communist Nationalist Party Chiang Kai-shek (or Jiang Jieshi) as Jiang Gai-shi (pp. 7, 8, 11, 20, 69, 73, 76, 77, 80, 84, 91, 101, etc.). To call Japan's Guandong Army in northeast China the Guangdong Army (p. 12), referring to a southeastern province, is like wishing to discuss the city of Atlanta in Georgia and yet calling it Atlantic City.

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a proletarian revolution could build socialism. In 1928 the Soviet Union tried to get China's Communist Party to stop insisting that Japan was the major threat to China's independence since that distracted from the struggle against Moscow's number one enemy. Throughout the 1930s and into the 1940s, Moscow, after running in a ruthless way its inherited Czarist concessions in China's northeast, called Manchuria, formally recognized, in a deal with militarist Japan, the fruits of Japanese conquest, Japan's puppet-state in Manchuria, Manchukuo. Stalin not only tried to get Mao to follow each flip and flop of Moscow's changing international line on whether Hitler was friend or foe, but tried to impose Moscow's policies on Mao's group both through military advisers and through the pro-Stalin faction in China's Communist party led by Wang Ming. In October 1940 Wang tried to talk Mao into a suicidal attack on Japan's army on the Soviet border to buy time for the Soviet Union. Throughout the war, Mao's side noticed that Stalin provided bullets to Jiang Jieshi and books to Mao Zedong. At the end of 1945 Stalin signed a treaty with China's anti-Communist leader Jiang Jieshi again guaranteeing the Soviet Union the old Czarist concessions in China's northeast. Even as Jiang's forces subsequently retreated before the rising tide of Mao's armies, the Soviet Union negotiated with Jiang for uranium concessions in China's western province of Xinjiang, which Moscow had tried to dominate, even, for a while, enrolling Chinese in the Soviet Union's Communist party. In contrast to most other ambassadors, the Soviet Union's Ambassador to China retreated from the capitol of Nanjing all the way south to Canton with the Jiang forces. To avoid getting entangled in China's civil war, Soviet forces, which had advanced through Manchuria even after Japan's surrender, retreated home, but taking with them as plunder all the Chinese industrial machinery they could transport from China's major industrial base.

Moscow insisted, after the establishment of the People's Republic, that its 1945-1949 help to Mao's forces in the urbanized, industrial northeastern region was crucial to China's revolutionary success. Hence there was no Maoist path to power by encircling the cities from the countryside. Only friendship with the socialist motherland permitted anti-imperialist victories. There was only one path, one truth, one source: Moscow. Indian Communists who saw it otherwise were disciplined. Ho Chi Minh's policies in Vietnam remained in contention. The Soviet view remained that the only path to independence of imperialism was subordination to the leader of the so-

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cialist camp, that is, dependence on the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union gave only limited and tentative support to China's costly struggle in Korea to pull Soviet chestnuts out of the fire, refused to discuss Mongolia with China and worked eventually to establish a strong anti-China position in India and to compete with China in North Korea and Vietnam. This expansive and hegemonic policy by 1955 had guaranteed that if China wished to pursue its independence, as it did in 1955 at the Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian nations which excluded the Soviet Union, as it did in 1956 when it and North Korea rejected subordinate membership in the Soviet Union's economic bloc, the Community for Mutual Economic Assistance, then Moscow would make Chinese independence costly. In 1956 and again in 1958, the Soviet Union threatened to withdraw from China all Soviet aid administrators. In 1960 it finally withdrew that aid. Chinese patriots could feel that Soviet pressures made the path of Maoist self-reliance the only path available to maintain China's independence.

The Soviet view of its relations with Mao's China is quite different. Soviet rulers see their early aid to China in the wake of the devastation of World War Two to have been uniquely generous. And Soviet leaders believe that they took risks in 1950 in signing a military treaty with China which greatly lessened the likelihood of a war involving China provoked by the American side. Economically and strategically, Soviet ruling groups still see the Maoist ruling groups as wastrels and ingrates. The Soviets still believe they acted as a fraternal party should act.

This important issue of party to party relations is not discussed by Medvedev. In the Leninist party system, relations among Leninist socialist states are often handled more by the International Liason Bureau of the Central Committee than by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They are supposed to reflect especially warm relations of proletarian internationalism.

China, witnessing the Soviet Union manipulate international party meetings against China, stopped attending such sessions and broke party to party relations. Proletarian internationalism was exposed as a mask for Soviet hegemony. Given Moscow's control over client states, there was no way Beijing could keep from being out-voted. It was not, however, going to accept Moscow's right to discipline Beijing.

During the Cultural Revolution, China's International Liason Bureau, in practice headed by Mao's inner party secret police chief, Kang Sheng, welcomed representatives of Maoist parties to Beijing

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and Shanghai. These delegates included Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge, the Indian Naxalites committed to "annihilationism" as a road to power, and the Peruvian group which became Sendero Luminoso, virtually a genocide international incorporated. Aided by Albania's Enver Hoxha, the groups pressed Kang and Mao to form a fifth international of truly revolutionary Communist parties. Mao refused. He wanted nothing more to do with communist internationals.

Hence the apparent agreement reached between the Foreign Ministers from Moscow and Beijing in September 1985 to pave the way toward establishing party to party relations is of some significance. China in 1986 agreed to establish such ties with East Germany, something that the Soviet Union had to approve of for it to happen. The Soviet Union seems to be forcing China to pay a price for good relations with the states of East and Central Europe. Chinese leaders had in 1986 to accept the military dictator of Poland as the first representative of Soviet-dominated European Leninist party states to visit China's Party leaders.

Moscow is willing to allow the notion of diverse roads through socialism. Certain ideological issues may be buried. This may be the basis of renewed party to party relations. China's reformers desire the legitimacy in dealing with their conservative opponents at home of having their reforms accepted as socialist by the Soviet Union. And Moscow is looking for ways to tie Beijing to Moscow so as to limit Beijing's opposition to Moscow's foreign policies in East Europe and elsewhere in the world. Moscow hopes to convene a meeting of Asian Communist parties which China will attend and to get these parties to join in opposition to America on issues such as Nicaragua, the Palestinians, Southern Africa, the militarization of space and third world debt relief.

So Moscow has recently reorganized its Foreign Ministry to establish a bureau of Asian socialist nations to handle China, Vietnam and Korea. Also, the Soviet Union has upgraded its dealing with helpful, friendly states that it does not consider to have consolidated socialism, nations such as India, Angola and Nicaragua. It even has established party to party ties with Gandhi's Congress Party. Thus there is data to buttress Medvedev's claim that self-consciously and explicitly Moscow has reduced the importance of ideological hegemony and raised the importance of *realpolitik*. But how much comfort can that give to rulers in Beijing focusing on the issue of Moscow's continuing *realpolitik* policy of military hegemony and positions of strength?

One clue to Chinese concern is a review of Medvedev's book in

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the independent Chinese-language Hong Kong magazine *Jiushi niandai (The Nineties)*. There (No. 10 (1986), pp. 52-54) Huan Guocang expresses great concern over the anti-China thrust of Soviet policy in Asia. He is not reassured by Medvedev. Mr. Huan imagines Moscow over the next few years using the Kim Il Sung succession crisis and Pyongyong's felt need to match advanced weapons purchases by Seoul to move North Korea into alignment with Soviet foreign policy. Chinese worry that the Vietnamese transition in the wake of the decline and death of Ho Chi Minh to a pro-Soviet, anti-China policy will be repeated in North Korea. Mr. Huan imagines Pakistan caving in to the pressures of the Soviet war in Afghanistan. China thus could lose its closest friend in South Asia. At the same time, to satisfy their regional military purposes, India and Vietnam will grow even more dependent on Soviet military deliveries, and therefore join on a common anti-China policy. The prospect is a China in Asia encircled, isolated and threatened by Moscow and its military dependencies such that centuries old Russian imperial ambitions to detach frontier regions of China may seem all too possible. Nothing in Medvedev's book prepares one for the depth of these Chinese concerns.

Medvedev sees no need for Moscow to retreat from the statist foreign policy gains of Stalin and his successors. This is not, Medvedev to the contrary notwithstanding, a basis for a Moscow-Beijing relationship between independent, anxiety-free, cooperating equals. Consequently, while Chinese and Soviet ruling groups each have their own reasons for promoting normal, healthy, economic, cultural, scientific and educational relations with the other, only major political changes by Moscow can end the basis for a realistic Chinese need to act with concern over the military meaning of Soviet policy in Mongolia, Afghanistan, Korea, India, Cambodia and Vietnam, let alone elsewhere in Asia with regard to such matters as Soviet missiles and the Soviet Pacific Fleet. Yet an escalating and uncontrolled Moscow-Washington arms race could compel Gorbachev to military concessions to China in order to free up funds for other military spending and economic renovation at home. That could begin a process of an extraordinary improvement in Moscow-Beijing relations. One cannot absolutely rule out something which is so easily imaginable. But assuming no fundamental political change in Washington, Moscow or Beijing, then, as long as China highly values its independence and the Soviet Union continues the Stalin-Brezhnev policies of military and political hegemony, there will be a strict limit on how far Moscow and Beijing can get together.

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Habermas' Philosophical Discourse of Modernity

Peter U. Hohendahl

In September 1980 when he accepted the Adorno-Prize of the city of Frankfurt, Habermas provoked his audience by insisting that the discourse of modernity, which supposedly had collapsed, was by no means obsolete; moreover, he stressed that it was still waiting for its ultimate fulfillment. Habermas openly attacked the notion that we have reached the age of postmodernism because this assumption would necessarily result in a flawed assessment of our future. Instead, Habermas insisted on the continuation of the Enlightenment project, even if this project, as he readily conceded, should not be pursued through the use of instrumental reason or in the mode of traditional subject philosophy. The reason for Habermas' polemic was his fear that the contemporary critique of rationalism would play into the hands of conservative forces — not only in West Germany but also in this country. Habermas' provocation was answered in similar fashion: both in France and in the U.S. poststructuralist theorists angrily rejected the positing of a logical link between postmodernist theory and political neo-conservatism. Lyotard, for instance, responded by arguing that it was Habermas' logocentric theory that should be called conservative and hopelessly outdated.[1]

It seems as if Habermas had entered a debate for which he was ill prepared. Before 1980 he had not had many serious encounters with French theory. He had acknowledged neither Foucault nor Derrida and his deconstructionist disciples in this country. His own interest in the Anglo-American and French tradition had clearly privileged theories which came out of European Enlightenment, among them analytic philosophy and the pragmatism of Dewey, Peirce and Mead. In *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1980) French structuralism and

1. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

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poststructuralism are simply absent. There are biographical and historical reasons for this gap. For a German intellectual who grew up during the Third Reich, the most influential forerunners of contemporary French theory, i.e., Nietzsche and Heidegger, are politically dubious because of their impact on or their involvement with German Fascism. This distrust of the Nietzsche-Heidegger connection continues in Habermas' latest book. His doubts concerning the validity and the political implications of poststructuralist theory are grounded in his hostility towards the German mastertexts on which French theory is based. However, between 1980 and 1985 Habermas has clearly moved away from the relatively simple opposition of Enlightenment versus postmodernism, or of progressive versus conservative traditions. The distance between Frankfurt and Paris has decreased, although it would be misleading to call Habermas' position poststructuralist. It can be said, however, that Habermas' intensive readings of Bataille, Foucault and Derrida have resulted in a more precise and also more fruitful statement of the theoretical differences between Paris and Frankfurt. Whether his French colleagues would agree with his interpretations of their texts is another matter. The recent attempt to bring "German" and "French" theory together in Paris was, as Rochlitz has suggested in his instructive account of the meeting,[2] unsuccessful. Both sides were ultimately unwilling to make a leap and familiarize themselves with the opposing arguments. It seems doubtful whether Habermas, who participated in the meeting only as an observer, could have prevented the disaster. Even his *Discourse of Philosophical Modernity*[3] would in all likelihood have been rejected by Derrida and his disciples as a defense of a position that still relies on the unquestioned premises of European rationalism. After all, Habermas did not change his position in the process of reading French theory. Still, there is one major agreement. It concerns the critique of the philosophy of consciousness, which Habermas fully shares with Foucault and Derrida. Thus, Habermas welcomes their attempts to move beyond the problematic concept of modern subjectivity, although his own critique of the subject differs significantly from the poststructuralist approach. Habermas shares with contemporary French theory the preference for a linguistic paradigm, yet he clearly does not support an understanding of language in which

2. Rainer Rochlitz, "The Missed Meeting — A Conference Report of French and German Philosophy," *Telos* 66 (Winter 1985/86), pp. 124-128.

3. Jürgen Habermas, *Der Philosophische Diskurs der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985).

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words function as a chain of signifiers for which a signified can never be established with certainty. This rhetorical interpretation of the function of language is unacceptable to Habermas because it makes intersubjective understanding and consensus impossible.

Some critics have argued that one cannot equate poststructuralism and postmodernism because poststructuralist discourse remains closer to modernism than to postmodernism. Poststructuralist theory is concerned with the texts of classical modernism. When Habermas refers to modernism (*Moderne*) he has a broader historical period in mind. He means the phase from roughly 1500 to the present for which German historians have coined the term "*Neuzeit*" (as opposed to "*Mittelalter*"). More specifically, he refers to the philosophical discourse that began with the Enlightenment of the 18th century and reached its maturity in the philosophy of Hegel. This is the moment when the theoretical awareness of historical modernity is fully developed. Hence, for Habermas the question of whether the present age is still part of modernity or whether it is already a phase of postmodernity can be answered only by addressing the accumulated philosophical problems of the last 150 years. This approach differs rather drastically from that of either Heidegger or Derrida who argue that the problem of modern thought, i.e., its logocentricity, goes back to ancient philosophy (Plato). Here, Habermas seems to be closer to Foucault, who assumes a fundamental epistemological break in the late 18th century. Even in this case, however, the differences are undeniable: while Foucault insists on the rupture between the classical episteme and modernism, Habermas views the German idealism of the early 19th century as a continuation of the Enlightenment project which began with Descartes.

Habermas defines modernity in the narrow sense (*Moderne* as opposed to *Neuzeit*) as the second stage of a philosophical discourse stretching from German idealism to the present. Modernity is understood as that historical moment when philosophy, by fully appropriating its own history, calls for its own cancellation (Marx) or at least radically questions the unproblematic continuation of its project (Left Hegelians). Therefore, Habermas claims that the philosophical discourse following Hegel's system — both its more conservative and its more radical branches — is still relevant today. Although they hardly offered lasting solutions, the positions developed in Germany during the 1840s still have a (mostly unacknowledged) impact on present philosophical discussion.

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For this reason, Habermas' debate with French theory begins with its German forerunners in the 19th century. At the center of this discussion we find Nietzsche, who clearly influenced Heidegger and also directly and indirectly had a major impact on contemporary French thought. It is not accidental that Habermas calls Nietzsche's work a "*Drehscheibe*" of European philosophy. In the fourth chapter, which deals with Nietzsche's critique of the Enlightenment, Habermas underscores the radical nature of this polemic which not only questions the content of previous philosophical discourse but attacks the episteme of rationalism itself — its method and its function. While Hegel saw reason as "reconciling self-knowledge" and the Left Hegelians defined reason as "emancipatory appropriation" by and for human beings, Nietzsche decides to cancel the project of rational critique. "Nietzsche ... rejects another revision of the concept of reason and cancels the dialectic of the enlightenment." (106f.) When Nietzsche undertakes a critique of the Enlightenment he does this with the intent "to explode the rational shell of modernity as such" (107).

This formulation may remind us of Lukács, for whom Nietzsche was one of the most important precursors of German Fascism. However — and this makes a major difference — Habermas does recognize the importance and validity of the historically accumulated epistemological problems, and he also differentiates much more clearly between Nietzsche's utopian project and its reactionary appropriation by the German Fascists. In order to demonstrate the problematic nature of Nietzsche's program, Habermas links Nietzsche's thought with German Romanticism (with Richard Wagner as the connecting link). He tries to explain the difference between Nietzsche's position and the Romantic approach to the problem of truth. As specifically romantic, Habermas defines the concept of a new mythology, a program to which Nietzsche remains indebted. "Of romantic origin is the idea of a new mythology, just as harking back to Dionysius as the coming god is a romantic notion. Yet Nietzsche distances himself from the romantic use of these ideas and proclaims an apparently more radical version which transcends Wagner's program" (109f.). It is not the interest in Dionysius that is original in Nietzsche's writings but, as Habermas underscores, the displacement and revision of the Dionysius figure. In Nietzsche the god Dionysius is clearly separated from the Christ figure — a separation which does not occur in Romantic thought. By cutting the link with Christian mythology — the presence of which he criticizes in Wag-

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ner's writings — Nietzsche redefines the utopian program in purely aesthetic terms. Thereby he undermines the liberal claim for an understanding of history which should culminate in the emancipation of humanity. "Invoking the opposite of reason, Nietzsche celebrates supposedly archaic experiences of the self-revelation of a decentered subjectivity freed from all the limitations of cognition and instrumental activity as well as all imperatives of usefulness and morality" (117). To put it differently: Habermas views Nietzsche — and, of course, he is not the first critic to see Nietzsche in this light — as the proponent of a radical aestheticism which rejects all cognitive and moral norms.

Expectedly, Habermas is highly critical of this position. He is especially critical of Nietzsche's theory of power, which later resurfaces in Bataille and Foucault. This theory, Habermas maintains, is ultimately unable to legitimate itself because its major thesis (everything is grounded in power relations) makes it impossible to ground theory rationally. As Habermas points out, this type of radical critique of rationality necessarily ends in an aporetic situation: the critique undercuts the ground on which the proof of its validity must be based. This fundamental contradiction reappears in various forms in Nietzsche's disciples. It can be traced in Bataille, Lacan, and Foucault, who continue the critique of subject-centered reason through anthropological, psychological, and historical arguments. It can also be found in Heidegger and Derrida, who follow Nietzsche's attack on metaphysics and therefore want to return to pre-Socratic philosophy. The most radical questioning of philosophy, however, may well turn into a defense of the status quo. He uses the case of Heidegger to demonstrate the link between a radical critique of rationality and German Fascism, and later he uses the case of Foucault to show the contradictions involved in a theory of power that borrows from Nietzsche. Within the context of this theory no critique of existing power structures can escape the argument that it is itself involved in claims for power. At the end of his chapter on Nietzsche, Habermas suggests that Heidegger at the same time continues and surpasses Nietzsche's critique of rationality. Heidegger takes over Nietzsche's aestheticism, i.e., the attempt to rescue philosophy by transforming it into art, but at the same time he wants to limit this program and moves towards a restitution of philosophy proper. Unlike Nietzsche, Heidegger does not appreciate the provocation of modernist art, its subversive function *vis-á-vis* a professionalized discourse of philosophy.

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Here it is useful to provide a more detailed analysis of Habermas' criticism of Heidegger, because this polemic serves as the background for his reading of Derrida and the American deconstructionists. Heidegger and Bataille, as far as they follow Nietzsche's lead, face the same problem: they want to carry out a radical critique of reason which "undercuts the roots of this very critique" (126). In his presentation of Heidegger's philosophy, Habermas follows the traditional division between Heidegger's early thought, which was still under the impact of Husserl's philosophy of consciousness, and the late philosophy of the 1940s and 1950s. But he does not follow Heidegger's own interpretation of this development, which reads the later writings as a "*Kehre*" that reinterprets the problems and questions presented in *Being and Time* (1928). Habermas' resistance to the late Heidegger's humanism is clearly motivated by political considerations. More than once Habermas points to the dangerous political implication of Heidegger's position, i.e., its closeness to Fascism. This connection is not simply a matter of Heidegger's dubious personal decision; rather, it is Heidegger's very discourse which is involved in thought patterns and arguments that affirm the power of the National Socialists.

Still, Habermas' critique cannot be reduced to a narrow political polemic. His aim is to demonstrate the inherent connection between Heidegger's specific philosophical criticism of traditional metaphysics and the historical circumstances in which this discourse was developed. In other words, Habermas offers a radical historical reading of Heidegger, while Heidegger himself thought of his philosophy as being above historical events. This interpretation throws a different light on Heidegger's position. His critique of "*Seinsverlassenheit*" appears as a mystification — an empty shell that can be filled in different ways according to changing historical circumstances. Thus, while Heidegger's position in *Being and Time* does not yet actively support the doctrine of National Socialism, neither does it preclude it.

This political problem is grounded in a philosophical argument. Habermas stresses again and again that Heidegger remained much closer to a philosophy of consciousness (*Subjektphilosophie*) than he was willing to admit. While the genesis of *Being and Time* has to be seen in the context of the neo-ontological movement of the 1920s, it is apparent that Heidegger could not return to pre-Kantian ontology. His own project grew out of neo-Kantian philosophy and the problems of "*Lebensphilosophie*." Thus, Habermas notes: "Heidegger uses the terminology of the neo-ontological turn in order to further the disso-

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lution of the concept of transcendental subjectivity; but this radical move retains the transcendental approach of a self-reflexive enlightenment of the conditions under which it is possible to be a person in the world" (171). Not only are Heidegger's pro-fascist statements between 1933 and 1935 (when he still believed in the revolutionary power of the movement) compatible with the language of *Being and Time*, but so is his later critique of Fascism where he stresses the critique of technology.

Habermas presents Heidegger as a German intellectual whose biography and philosophy participated in the Fascist movement. Such an involvement cannot be found in Heidegger's French disciples. Derrida's interest in Heidegger's critique of metaphysical thought, for instance, is clearly unrelated to Heidegger's 1933 political decision. What Derrida appreciates in Heidegger's position is the emphasis on the end of European history and the decline of traditional European philosophy. Thus, Derrida continues Heidegger's later writings, but at the same time he returns to Husserl's phenomenology which he interprets as the final expression of European logocentricity. Habermas describes Derrida's project as an anarchist and subversive struggle that aims at undermining the foundations of Western metaphysics (192) — a strategy which Habermas acknowledges as an important contribution, although he does not believe in its efficacy. According to Habermas, Derrida's critique of European metaphysics remains dependent on the very structures he wants to criticize. The attempt to explode the foundations of logocentric thinking only leads to the search for ever deeper foundations (*écriture*). This fundamentalism in reverse cannot, therefore, escape the structure of a philosophy of origin (*Ursprungsphilosophie*). Hence, Derrida is closer to Heidegger than he himself would admit.

What are Habermas' arguments, and what are their implications? In his chapter on Derrida, Habermas focuses his analysis on Derrida's critique of Husserl. From a critique of Husserl's theory of language and his thesis that an ultimate grounding of pure philosophy should be possible through intuitive "*Anschauung*," Derrida reaches a position that favors *ecriture* rather than phonemes. As Derrida notes: "The rationality which dominates such a broadened and radicalized writing does not originate in Logos. Rather, it begins with the destruction and, if not the breaking, at least with the desedimentation, the deconstruction of all meanings the origin of which lies in the meaning of the Logos. This is particularly true for (the concept of) truth" (194). Habermas traces the argument Derrida pre-

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sents in *Speech and Phenomena* in detail; his strategy, in other words, aims at an immanent critique. The point of his reconstruction is to show that in Derrida *ecriture* rather than Logos becomes the starting point. Habermas appears to be willing to follow Derrida's critique of presence and his insistence on difference. At the end of his argument he notes: "Thus, Derrida arrives at a reversal of Husserl's fundamentalism because the transcendental power of origin is transferred from the originating subjectivity to the anonymous productivity of *ecriture* in which history is grounded." (210f.)

This is where Habermas finally inserts his criticism. He understands Derrida's movement as a reversal rather than an overcoming of *Ursprungsphilosophie*. The history of Being is replaced by a complicated mirror image: the mirroring of a text in another one, which again is mirrored in a third one. Each text can only directly or indirectly point to the orginal text without ever reaching the *Urschrift*. This search for the original text, however, which for Derrida takes the place of the search for the transcendental subject, is for Habermas both a continuation and a radicalization of Heidegger's program. "Unintentionally he (Derrida) discloses the reversed fundamentalism of his thought when he overcomes ontological difference and Being through the difference of an *ecriture* which displaces an origin already in motion to an even deeper level" (213).

The weakness of Derrida's approach, Habermas argues, lies in its dependence on the very kind of *Ursprungsphilosophie* which Derrida means to criticize. Thus, Derrida ends up with "formulaic incantations of uncertain authorities"(214). It is obvious that Habermas does not expect Derrida's project to result in a viable political praxis. Strangely enough, however, he does not make this criticism explicit. Rather, when dealing with the socio-political consequences of Derrida's philosophy, Habermas emphasizes the positive value of deconstruction in comparison with Heidegger's endorsement of archaic Greek culture. Following Handelman, Habermas argues that Derrida's approach has to be seen against the background of Jewish mysticism and its heretical hermeneutic theory.[4] Hence, Derrida's deconstruction belongs to a tradition that opposes the hegemony of Christian logos and its hermeneutics in Paul's teaching. The attempt to rescue writing from the hegemony of the spirit suggests Derrida's proximity to Benjamin's anarchist philosophy of history. For

4. Susan Handelman, "Jacques Derrida and the Heretic Hermeneutic," in M. Krapnick, ed., *Displacement, Derrida and After* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp.98ff.

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Habermas this comparison clearly implies both respect and distance. Habermas has never concealed his admiration for Benjamin, at the same time he has made it clear that he does not believe in the feasibility of Benjamin's project.[5] In an extended footnote to a passage concerning the relation between philosophy and literature (246-7) Habermas makes a very important general point: he argues — not only against Derrrida but also against Adorno and Benjamin — that they read and write philosophy as if they were only one generation removed from Hegel. These critics, insofar as they see themselves as disciples of Nietzsche, remain caught in those universal problems which they received from the philosophical tradition extending from Plato to Hegel. Habermas, on the other hand, wants to remove philosophy from this need for an ultimate grounding (*Letztbegründungen*) and limit its project. According to him, the business of philosophy does not differ fundamentally from other disciplines — all results are fallible in principle, they are grounded in praxis and history, and therefore they have to be reconsidered under different circumstances. In this claim for a pragmatic position, Habermas is not far from someone like Rorty, whom he explicitly mentions in this context. This position, however, does not imply a repudiation of normative claims, as one might read the move against *Letztbegründungen*. This is precisely the point where Habermas disagrees with Foucault, with whom he shares more common ground than with Derrida.

Apparently Habermas was seeking a dialogue with Foucault before the latter unexpectedly died in 1984.[6] In his obituary, Habermas openly expressed a feeling of appreciation without, however, sugggesting at any point that he was in agreement with Foucault's theory. Habermas' proximity to Foucault's work, which also clearly comes through in the two chapters devoted to him in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, is grounded in the nature of the questions that Foucault would ask, especially in Habermas' interest in Foucault's critique of the philosophy of consciousness. Reading *The Order of Things* and *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Habermas could not fail to notice the similarity with (but, of course, also the difference from) his own attempts to overcome the transcendental approach (which was still dominant in *Knowledge and Human Interest*) by moving

5. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Walter Benjamin: Consciousness-Raising or Rescuing Critique," in Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles* (London: Heinemann, 1983), pp.129-163.

6. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, "Mit dem Pfeil ins Herz getroffen," in Habermas, *Die neue Unübersichtlichkeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp.126-131.

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closer to the epistemology of system theory. This comparison would also, however, reveal the similarities of Foucault's and Luhmann's positions with respect to fundamental methodological assumptions — for instance, their basic common antagonism to hermeneutics. Thus, Habermas' analysis of Foucault's work concentrates on two related aspects: (1) the antihermeneutic attitude of archeological and genealogical history and (2) the move towards a general theory of power in Foucault's late writings. For Habermas this theory of power is the bold but ultimately unsuccessful attempt to establish a new kind of subject-decentered historiography without metaphysical foundations.

While the ninth chapter primarily introduces Foucault's theory, the tenth chapter, entitled "Aporias of a Theory of Power," presents Habermas' critique of Foucault's theory. Here, the focus will be on three questions: (1) what does Habermas mean by his claim that Foucault is undercutting the hermeneutic approach, (2) how does Foucault's general theory of power grow out of this anti-hermeneutic strategy, which replaces the concept of interpretation (*Verstehen*) with the concept of discourse, and finally, (3) why does Habermas so emphatically object to the theory of power?

Foucault, so Habermas argues, wants to move away from the historical paradigm which privileges the present (as the point of departure) and understands the writing of history as a form of self-understanding. This strategy also necessarily undercuts the hermeneutic approach. "The hermeneutic approach wants to appropriate meaning; in every text (*Dokument*) it expects to discover a voice that had been silenced and ought to be revitalized. This idea of texts imbued with meaning must be radically questioned as much as the practice of interpretation" (294). This implies: the perspective of the observer replaces the perspective of the participant. Closely connected with this stance are the attack on any totalizing form of history, which attempts to understand the process from a central concept, and the renunciation of expressive causality, which argues that the divergent phenomena of a given period can be related to a center containing the essential meaning of the period. Foucault replaces historical interpretation with the analysis of discourses — a method that deliberately keeps its distance from the material under consideration.

Readers familiar with Foucault will find little new in the ninth chapter. Yet, the reconstruction of the argument (as usual in Habermas) is no more than a preparation for the systematic discussion that follows in chapter ten. Again, Habermas begins his critique

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of Foucault's theory of power with a close reading of the text. Then Habermas suggests that discourse analysis is faced with a fundamental problem. "These rules which an archeological approach can reconstruct are seen as those rules which make the various discursive practices possible. These rules, however, can explain only the conditions of the possibility of a discourse; they are not sufficient to explain the factual operation (*Funktionieren*) of a discursive practice" (315).

Foucault is faced with the problem that a discursive practice controlled by its rules cannot determine the context in which it functions. Foucault responds to this problem with a general theory of power. The archeology of knowledge is therefore subsumed by a geneaology of knowledge "which explains the genesis of knowledge by pointing to practices of power" (315). Still following Foucault's strategy Habermas acknowledges two advantages of this move in Foucault's theory. First, this strategy allows Foucault to distance himself from the philosophy of consciousness and, secondly, it provides the various discourses of knowledge with a common ground. The general theory of power is supposed to explain the operation of theoretical discourses. However, Habermas argues that this strategy is doomed to failure; he holds that Foucault's theory of power does not escape the quandaries of subject-centered philosophy. According to Habermas, the theory of power itself is ambiguous because it is supposed to operate on two different levels. On the one hand, it is expected to analyze empirical power constellations; on the other hand, it has to function as a transcendental theory explaining the very possibility of theoretical discourses. As Habermas notes: "In his basic concept of power, Foucault brings together the idealist notion of transcendental synthesis and the notion of an empiricist ontology" (322). Consequently, Foucault faces the following aporia: if we assume with Foucault that the concept of truth is based on the concept of power (rather than the other way around, as idealism presupposes), then we cannot explain successful action, since successful action can be measured only in cognitive terms, i.e., according to its adequacy *vis-à-vis* specific circumstances. Of course, in using this argument against Foucault, Habermas presupposes the priority of the acting subject — a subject that relates to the world either in terms of cognition or in terms of practice. Foucault, on the other hand, reverses this relationship: Subjectivity is the result of discourses grounded in power relations.

Although Foucault and Habermas strive towards a similar goal,

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i.e., a critique of the philosophy of consciousness, their solutions to this problem differ significantly. While Foucault (following Nietzsche) treats normative considerations (*Geltungsansprüche*) as purely functional aspects and reduces them to power relations, Habermas insists that this strategy does serious harm to the definition of social praxis. Moreover, he claims that Foucault's theory rests on basic contradictions. The most fundamental one is this: genealogical historians must make a truth claim for their research and presentation. As soon as they apply the genealogical method to their own project, it leads to an unresolvable contradiction. Habermas distinguishes three aspect of this aporia (325): (1) genealogical historians are part of a temporal context; (2) an analysis of history grounded in a specific moment of history itself can only make relative truth claims; (3) genealogical historians, no matter how much they try to distance themselves from the material (documents, facts, etc.) remain partisans. Foucault's method suppresses the hermeneutic aspect of historical analysis. In his early work Foucault simply does not reflect on the position of the cognitive subject, i.e., the perspective of the historian. In his later work, under the influence of Nietzsche, this objective stance results in general skepticism — an attitude which Habermas somewhat viciously calls "confessional irrationalism" (327). He observes: "The unmasking of the objectivist illusion of any cognitive project results in an acceptance of a position where the historian narcissistically concentrates on himself/herself" (327). If we limit the concept of truth to the specific discourse in which it is used, if, in other words, we limit the category of truth to the impact which it has within a specific discourse, then Foucault's theory cannot be universalized and would have no more than local relevance. This conclusion, however, frustrates Habermas because it takes Foucault's project seriously and supports his attempt to undermine any form of power (also those forms that dress up as scientific truth). Hence, Habermas insists (against Foucault) on a universal concept of truth which cannot be derived from power relations. (This, of course, does not exclude that concrete scientific projects may be motivated by considerations other than the search for truth). Clearly, for Habermas power and truth operate on different levels. Specifically, truth cannot be grounded in power. In the end, Habermas disagrees with Foucault's claim that all norms and standards are ultimately relative; he disagrees with the thesis that the historian must therefore refrain from value statements in order not to be affected by with the influence and power of existing discourses. With good reasons,

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Habermas argues that this position cannot be carried out consistently. Foucault's discourse — as a radical critique of the humanities and social sciences (*Geisteswissenschaft*) — contains implicit value judgments. Habermas wants to show that Foucault, as much as he steers clear of an explicit statement, occasionally admits that normative criteria are unavoidable (333).

At this point Foucault and his disciples might ask Habermas: how do you explain these norms and values (in the social as well as in the scientific sphere)? Do you not fall back on a position that emphasizes the need for these values and covers up their origin in power relations? These questions would force Habermas to account for his own position and to examine the basis from which he launches his critique of poststructuralist theory. In the concluding chapters he tries to answer these questions by restating his own theory. Most of all, he wants to demonstrate that there is a third way — beside philosophy of consciousness and poststructuralism (Chapter XI). Furthermore, he wants to illuminate why the project of modernity cannot simply be cancelled (Chapter XII).

As one would expect, in these final chapters Habermas basically refers back to his theory of communicative action. He considers this theory a realistic and pragmatic approach — equally distant from the dangers of logocentric philosophy of consciousness with its problems of "*Letztbegründungen*" and from the pure rejection of metaphysics in the work of Foucault, Derrida and their disciples — a rejection which easily results in irrationalism. This claim also throws more light on Habermas' understanding of the project of modernity (*Aufklärung*). What he has in mind is not, contrary to what some of his critics have claimed, simply the continuation of the idealist tradition. Habermas thinks in terms of a third alternative that would avoid the dangers of logocentrism and deconstruction. In this search, he feels close to a philosopher like Rorty who tries to rewrite the history of philosophy in terms of a radical critique of modern philosophy and its development from Descartes to Heidegger. Habermas could hardly share this program fully because he would have to cut himself off from the tradition in which he was trained, but it is apparent that today he has more affinities with thinkers like Dewey or Mead than with German idealism or even with the philosophy of the early Marx. Like Foucault and Derrida, Habermas insists on a paradigm change because he concurs with them that the metaphysical tradition of European philosophy is exhausted. In his opinion, the old paradigm is to be replaced with the model of communicative action in which nei-

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ther the subject nor factual relations are the basis. Instead, the point of departure is communicative interactions. In particular, Habermas wants to undercut the opposition of an empirical and a transcendental subject, an opposition that even the critics of logocentrism have retained in their attacks.

How can this program be grounded? How can it be defended against the criticism that it remains part of the old paradigm of subject philosophy (Lyotard's criticism)? Habermas decided to ground his theory in language theory, especially speech-act theory. In the eleventh chapter he restates his arguments for this approach. Habermas believes that language itself contains the premises for a theory of communicative action. In other words, the explication of speech-acts is not only supposed to explain how actual human communication works, but it is also supposed to demonstrate why consensus and thereby human solidarity is possible at all. It is impossible here to discuss this theory in detail. The following will rather focus primarily on its implications for the understanding of modernity. Habermas argues that the linguistic approach allows a rereading of the project of the Enlightenment in a different light and thereby reappropriate its semantic content with new eyes. This revisionist tendency in Habermas' interpretation of modernity has to be emphasized more strongly than usual. As Habermas notes: "Once we understand knowledge as mediated through communication, rationality can be measured in terms of the capacity of responsible participants to orient themselves *vis-à-vis* normative claims (*Geltungsansprüche*) that lead to intersubjective acknowledgments. Communicative reason finds its criterion in argumentative procedures of direct or indirect fulfillment of claims to propositional truth, normative accuracy, subjective authenticity, and aesthetic harmony (*Stimmigkeit*)" (366). To put it differently: the use of reason is not conceived anymore in terms of an absolute origin; rather, it unfolds within the context of an intersubjective exchange of arguments, an exchange which will necessarily raise normative claims. But these claims are not absolute: they can be questioned at any given time.

Habermas' use of speech-act theory contains a descriptive and a normative aspect. On the one hand, the analysis of speech-acts explains how human communication actually works. On the other hand, it is also used by Habermas to ground his social theory which emphasizes human emancipation. Habermas has been accused by his critics of idealizing the actual use of language in human communication. This reproach, however, misses the real problem. The weak

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spot in Habermas' argument is the dual function of language. By pointing to the actual operation of linguistic and social communication, Habermas conceals that these empirical conditions are ultimately turned into a normative understanding of language. This dualism results in an aporetic situation which, incidentally, is not very different from the contradictions in Foucault's theory of power — although with a different turn. By insisting that linguistic communication, as it functions in the real life-world, provides the basis for the new paradigm, Habermas distances himself from a transcendental argument. But this move has a price: the rigid equation of facts and norms. As Habermas notes: "Individuals involved in communicative actions make normative claims in their speech-acts, in doing this they rely on a pool of fallible arguments. This means that an element of absolute validity is built into the factual processes of communication" (375). Those norms to which we have recourse in our everyday interaction are, as Habermas suggests, context-bound, but there is another important aspect which "serves as the foundation for the actual consensus" (375). This thesis seems to be close to a transcendental argument. To put it differently: if we want to avoid the quasi-transcendental structure of the argument, it might be safer to drop the use of universal norms and favor a purely local, context-bound use of rationality. Obviously, Habermas is not inclined to draw this conclusion, since universal normative claims (*Geltungsansprüche*) are of great importance for the structure of his emancipatory social theory.

The last chapter, then, tries to make two points. First, it shows why Habermas in the final analysis refuses to subscribe to the presuppositions of poststructuralist theory; secondly, it sketches the outline of an alternative theory. It becomes quite clear, incidentally, that Habermas does not speak out in favor of a continuation of classical Critical Theory. In fact, he sees the later work of Adorno, for instance *Negative Dialectics* and *Aesthetic Theory*, as part of a tendency from which he wants to distance himself. Why, then, does Habermas, after a full-scale analysis of its major texts, decide to draw a line between himself and French theory? He argues that the poststructuralist critique of reason reduces the concept of rationality to such an extent that significant distinctions become irrelevant. In particular, Habermas turns against the undialectical critique of subjectivity, i.e., the general attack on logocentricity. This polemic has reduced the ambiguity of modernity by stressing the negative elements without considering the positive side of the account. The frontal attack has thereby repressed the progressive potential of moderni-

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ty. As Habermas observes: "This critique of the essential elements of modernity not only repudiates the dangerous consequences of reified self-reference, but also cancels those connotations which explain subjectivity, connotations in other words that subjectivity once contained as unredeemed promises: the expectation that there will be a self-conscious practice in which self-determined solidarity of all individuals would encourage and support the authentic self-realization of these individuals. This criticism rejects precisely those elements that the age of modernity, when it fully grasped its own project, articulated through the concepts of self-consciousness, self-determination, and self-realization" (391f.).

This statement clearly defines the direction of Habermas' program. It differs significantly from the project of his teachers (Horkheimer and Adorno), but also from those traditions within Marxist theory which want to reemphasize the category of human praxis. Unlike Horkheimer and Adorno, Habermas can positively relate to Weber's work. While *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* reads modernity — through the eyes of the early Lukács — primarily as a process of increasing reification, Habermas sees Weber's description of modern history (a process of disenchantment) also as a positive and encouraging tendency. Since *Legitimation Crisis*, Habermas has maintained that modern society has developed through a process of "*Ausdifferenzierungen*," which results in a system consisting of relatively autonomous subsystems and spheres. Thus he writes about the cultural system: "These systems of knowledge in the spheres of art and criticism, science and philosophy, law and morality have split off from everyday communication. This tendency has been most radical where these subsystems have rigorously and one-sidedly concentrated on a single language function and a single normative claim. Because of this abstraction they must not, however, be regarded as the symptoms of decay within subject-centered reason" (393). It is fairly obvious that this sentence also contains a critical indictment of Adorno's philosophy. For Habermas, the fundamental development on which his reflections on modern society are based is the difference between the life-world and system, as it begins to surface during the 18th century. In this context he encourages the rehabilitation of reason (*Vernunft*) — a project beset with problems, as Habermas knows so well. Hence, his defense of reason must chart its course most carefully in order not to succumb to the dangers of instrumental or the lure of "inclusive" reason — both of which have a totalitarian character.

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How, then, can we define Habermas' position *vis-à-vis* post-structuralist theory? It is clearly not a wholesale indictment; rather, it is an attitude of critical distance. Habermas is sympathetic to the questions and problems which motivated the structuralists and post-structuralists to problematize the Western philosophical tradition; however, he is less sympathetic to their solutions. Under these circumstances we may well raise the question: Has the whole enterprise been worthwhile? The answer depends on the reader's expectations. If one expects that Habermas would embrace poststructalist theories, the response will be negative. If, on the other hand, one understands this venture as an assessment of today's major theoretical problems, then Habermas' contribution to the contemporary theoretical debate must be welcome.

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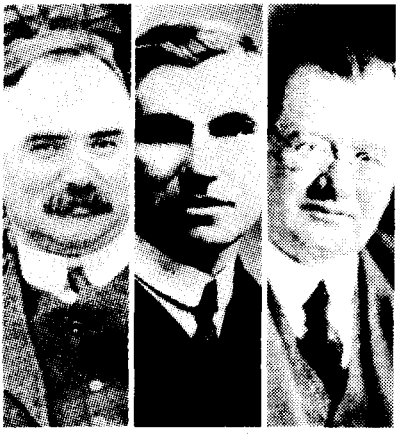

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Ethics and Critical Theory: From Horkheimer to Habermas

John Torpey

The absence of Horkheimer's "Materialism and Morality" from his collection of essays *Critical Theory*[1] suggests a troublesome truth about the Marxist tradition. Marxism has either dismissed moral philosophy or decried it as ideology. Horkheimer's appropriation of Kantian ethics probably seemed too old-fashioned to the editors. The piece must have appeared to be a digression from the "real" concerns of left politics. But recently there has been a new interest in the essay.[2] Like Horkheimer's assessment of the cultural basis of idealist ethics, this interest in ethics must be understood historically. Before comparing Habermas' *Diskursethik* with Horkheimer's position on morality, it is useful to review briefly the historical relation between materialism and morality.

In his recent *Marxism and Morality*, Lukes argues that, "Marxism's attitude to morality is paradoxical." He recounts how G.A. Cohen skeptically remarked that to deal with Marxism and ethics sounded like having to write a short book.[3] The reason for the paradox is that Marxism has combined a profound moral indignation toward capitalism with a rejection of moral theory as a bourgeois ideological weapon. Lukes condemns Marxism for its tendency to banish ques-

1. Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* trans. Matthew O'Connell and others (New York: Seabury Press, 1972).

2. Cf. Herbert Schnädelbach, "Max Horkheimer and the Moral Philosophy of German Idealism," *Telos* 66 (Winter 1985-86); Hauke Brunkhorst, "Dialektischer Positivismus des Glücks," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 39:3 (Juli-Sept. 1985); Jürgen Habermas, "Moral und Sittlichkeit: Hegels Kantkritik im Lichte der Diskursethik," *Merkur* 39:12 (December 1985); Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 19db) pp. 190-205.

3. Steven Lukes, *Marxism and Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) p. xiv.

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tions of the Good and the Just to an unknowable future and its proclivity to justify morally problematic actions in the present on the teleological assumption of the coming realm of freedom.

As Lukes points out, the question of Marxism and ethics has been especially important in Eastern European debates. The "ethics deficit" in Marxism has had disturbing ramifications where Marxism has captured state power. Recently Stojanovic has made the embarassing admission: "A Marxist ethics, at least one worthy of Marx's name, has yet to be constructed... How could it have happened that a revolutionary movement whose goal was the realization of the most radical humanistic ideals still lacks a developed ethics?"[4] That Marxist theory has only a *tactical* attachment to morality no doubt deeply undermines the socialist project.

The problematic status of moral philosophy goes far back in Marxist thought. Bernstein set off a torrent of interest in Kantian ethics in 1899 with the publication of *Evolutionary Socialism*.[5] Hitherto in the socialist movement "Kant was not criticized; he was ignored."[6] Bernstein denigrated scientific Marxism in favor of a reinvestigation of the socialist movement's moral insights. He argued that Marx's insights concerning the contradictions of capitalist society by no means made the new age inevitable. Though socialism might not be inevitable, however, Bernstein held that it was ethically *desirable*. Bernstein separated fact from value and posited the primacy of will and thus action over the determinism of economic laws.

Responding to Bernstein's challenge, Kautsky opposed the historical analysis of morality and ideology to Kant's universal categorical imperative. He took for granted that formal ethics was at odds with the materialist interpretation of history. Accordingly, he charged that the categorical imperative constituted a "repudiation of materialism [and of] the Freedom of the Will," and that its "historical and social tendency... has been that of toning down, of reconciling the antagonisms"[7] within bourgeois society.

4. Svetozar Stojanovic, *Between Ideals and Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) p. 137.

5. Edward Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, trans. Edith C. Harvey (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1909).

6. Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bern- stein's Challenge to Marx* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952) p. 144. Gay points out that Bernstein was greatly influenced by the Neo-Kantian Socialists F. A. Lange and Hermann Cohen, on whom cf. Thomas Willey, *Back to Kant* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1978), esp. Chs. 4 and 5.

7. Karl Kautsky, *Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History* trans. John B. Askew

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In that same year, 1906, Bauer rebuked Kautsky for rejecting the relevance of Kantian ethics for socialism. Bauer anticipated Horkheimer's "Materialism and Morality" by arguing that the categorical imperative can indeed be applied in a materialist and historical fashion with progressive political effect: "Without ever having heard of Kant's categorical imperative, [the individual] will immediately judge the maxims flowing from the class interest of the proletariat differently from those of the classes defending their property... He will recognize the universally valid imperative in the maxims of those who necessarily fight for a social order which is not so much the realization of the moral law — there is no such social order — but which makes it possible to fight for the correct decision in every particular case where the will of society as a whole is faced with a decision."[8]

The aftermath of the Russian Revolution provoked Lukács' bitter reproach to Kautsky to justify the more extreme Bolshevik practices in consolidating the revolution. In "Bolshevism as a Moral Problem," he argued against the notion that freedom can be "attained by means of oppression." In order to achieve "the realization of *social democracy in its totality* instead of in fragments," Lukács argued that one must reject Bolshevik tactics because "Bolshevism rests on the metaphysical assumption that the bad can engender the good, or, as Razumikhin says in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, that it is possible to lie our way through to the truth."[9] By early 1919, however, Lukács had undergone a *volte face*. "Tactics and Ethics" appropriated a neo-Hegelian Marxist philosophy of history which made the promotion of proletarian class struggle the ultimate arbiter of ethically correct action. Thus, any compromise with the existing order and its ethical maxims "is fraught with... the danger that the feelings of solidarity will take root in that form of consciousness which necessarily obscures the world-historical consciousness, the awakening of humanity to self-consciousness."[10]

Despite his earlier attack on Bolshevik metaphysics, Lukács had espoused a historical teleology that justified paramount role of the

(Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, & C., 1918), p. 69.

8. Otto Bauer, "Marxism and Ethics," in Tom Bottomore and Patrick Goode, eds., *Austro-Marxism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 81-2.

9. The essay, first published in the Hungarian journal *Szabad- gondolat* ("*Free Thought*") in December 1918, appeared in *Social Research* 44 (Autumn, 1977), p. 423-4

10. Georg Lukács, "Tactics and Ethics," in his *Political Writings, 1919-1929* trans. Michael McColgan, Rodney Livingstone, ed. (London: New Left Books, 1972) pp. 6, 9.

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Bolsheviks in determining what action was justified. The result was an interpretive *carte blanche* for the vanguard party.[11]

In addition to Kautsky's evolutionism and Lukács' messianic revolutionary metaphysics, Horkheimer was reacting to neo-Kantianism. In academic quarters, neo-Kantianism had flowered in the late 1800's. The philosophy of values became crucial to the normative justification of empirical research, which could not account for the objectivity of values. Logical positivism banished such matters from scientific discourse, and the opposition between philosophy and science grew.

Horkheimer considered this situation unacceptable. He viewed the widening rift between philosophy and the social sciences as a symptom of dividing substantive and instrumental reason — development which he considered irreversible in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. He sought, therefore, a program of philosophically informed social research that would rescue philosophy from idealist metaphysics and empirical science from positivism.[12] Horkheimer concluded that "materialism requires the unification of philosophy and science,"[13] or the "social scientific transformation of philosophy."[14]

The problem of bourgeois morality must be conceived as a *historical* problem, for "the modern problem of morality in its essentials has its roots in the bourgeois order."[15] Instead of rejecting the categorical imperative, Horkheimer's conception entails an historical, and immanently critical appropriation of it. On this model, Kantian moral philosophy points to "a future happy humanity." Horkheimer seeks, in "Materialism and Morality" the utopian potential of the categorical imperative through materialism. In this sense, Horkheimer was closer to the neo-Kantian socialists than to the orthodox Marxists regarding idealist moral thought. Yet, he rejected Bauer's view that Kant's ethics occupied a realm outside historical materialism, introduced as a last resort in the face of ethical skepticism toward the socialist project. Horkheimer placed Kant's

11. Lukes, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

12. On the relationship between philosophy and science in Horkheimer's early conception of Critical Theory, cf. Helmut Dubiel, *Theory and Politics: Studies in the Development of Critical Theory* trans. Benjamin Gregg Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985) pp. 35 ff.

13. Max Horkheimer, "Materialism and Metaphysics," in *Critical Theory*, op.cit., p. 34.

14. Hauke Brunkhorst, "Dialektischer Positivismus des Gluecks," *op. cit.*, p. 34

15. Max Horkheimer, "Materialism and Morality," in this issue of *Telos*

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demand that human actions be guided by moral norms at the center of a critique of capitalism.

According to Horkheimer, Kant's abdication of social critique by no means vitiates the power of Kant's ethics. Because the "categorical imperative runs up against the impossibility of its meaningful realization in this society of isolated individuals, [i]ts necessary implication is thus the transformation of this society."[16] Echoing Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach," Horkheimer contends that Kantian ethics has a "very active relation to reality." The problem is that Kant's ethical demand that each individual should be treated as an end and not merely as a means is "in contrast to that which is the rule in the bourgeois world." Thus, capitalist society is a kind of embryonic socialism in which the emancipatory potential is implicit but repressed.

Horkheimer's aim was to secure Kantian formal, liberal goals concretely in the lives of a deprived humanity. But the ascetic moment in ethical formalism was always unsatisfactory to Horkheimer, who saw no possibility of making good the suffering of previous generations. With a human community divided by social conditions over which individuals exercise no rational control, *sympathy* remains the central ethical category. Because bourgeois society raises self-preservation to the status of a law of nature and thus correspondingly denigrates solidarity with others, sympathy both constitutes an act of protest and points toward a future happy humanity. Solidarity criticizes egoist rationality.

This "materialist minimal morality of '*sympathy*' is the Schopenhauerian legacy in Horkheimer: 'solidarity with suffering human beings.'"[17] A materialist and critical theory of society which understands itself as "an aspect of efforts to improve the human situation"[18] must, according to Horkheimer, return to human needs, the inevitability of human weakness, and the possibility of human happiness within morality. Here, Horkheimer breaks with Kantianism, which separates interest, inclination, and duty. Instead,

16. Of course, Horkheimer would later have more to say about the way in which egoism — which "bourgeois anthropology" had totally denigrated to the level of base motives — constitutes the assertion of an individual claim to happiness. Cf. "Egoism and the Freedom Movement," *Telos* 54 (Winter 1982-83).

17. Brunkhorst, *op.cit.*, p. 365. Brunkhorst is here quoting "Materialism and Metaphysics," *op. cit.*, p. 44.

18. Horkheimer, "Materialism and Metaphysics," *op. cit.*, p. 26.

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Horkheimer follows Schopenhauer by insisting on the normative implications of being finite humans. Human satisfaction must be sensuous and historical; not transcendent, but immediate; not abstract, but concrete; not ideal, but real.

Given the sensuous, finite, historical character of human needs and their satisfaction, Horkheimer concludes that the conditions constitutive of a good life are empirical. As he later demonstrated in "Egoism and the Freedom Movement," again in debt to Schopenhauer, the bourgeois tendency to banish needs and desires to a profane realm on the level of animals was characteristic of the ascetic worldview which maintained the bourgeois social order by denying individual happiness. Accordingly, against Nicolai Hartmann's ordering of eternal virtues, Horkheimer remarks: "There is no eternal realm of values. Needs and desires, interests and passions of human beings are transformed together with the social process." The realization of morality is left to the future achievement of a rational organization of society in which anarchic social conditions are eliminated along with market production relations.

Horkheimer has a naturalistic interpretation of happiness. Brunkhorst calls him a "dialectical positivist of happiness," because "materialism does not suspect a suprahistorical agency behind morality." The claim of all to happiness "asks not in the least for justification or grounding."

As Schnädelbach puts it; "This *fundamental eudemonism* of the materialist moral philosophy is no mere counterthesis to Kant's ethics, because his privileging of the worthiness of happiness above happiness itself... requires recourse to the 'fact of pure practical reason' in order to be plausible — that is to say, a fact which, in contrast to the human striving after happiness, has the disadvantage for the materialist of not existing."[19] Horkheimer's insistence on love, solidarity, and sympathy — on moral action in defiance of the 'natural laws' that govern capitalist society and enforce irrational self-preservation — is an antidote to those who privilege the Just over the Good. For Horkheimer all previous history has been characterized by an unjust distribution of suffering or, as he elegantly put it, that "happiness itself is negative."[20]

19. Schnädelbach, "Max Horkheimer and the Moral Philosophy of German Idealism," *op.cit.*, p. 90.

20. "Schopenhauer Today," in Kurt Wolff and Barrington Moore, Jr. eds., *The Critical Spirit: Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967) p. 65.

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II.

Over the last several years, Habermas has developed an ethical theory extending his theory of communicative action.[21] Whereas Horkheimer in the early 1930's wrote against positivism, idealism, and orthodox Marxism, Habermas confronts different demons. Contemporary moral philosophy oscillates between emotivism (rooted in positivism) based on the notion of the intrinsic subjectivity of ethical precepts; nihilism which contends that universal moral statements are mere will to power; and, finally, traditionalism recalling the moral community of the past from which ethics drew its animating spirit and compelling character. In one form or another, each position announces the end of the modern project of a rational ground for universal moral principles. Habermas' project is to salvage Kantian ethical universalism within his communicative ethics.

As Hohendahl writes, "What is ultimately at stake for Habermas is no less than the idea of rationality" itself.[22] While the positivist *bête noire* of Critical Theory still plays a decisive role in his thinking, Habermas has devoted increasing attention to a defense of rationalism against the resurgence of Nietzsche's influence. Nietzsche's analysis of rationalism as a disguised form of the will to power, Habermas argues, is already apparent in the pessimistic direction taken by Horkheimer and Adorno in the mid-1940's.[23] Adorno and Horkheimer combined Nietzsche's critique with their Lukacs' theory of reification in modern rationalization. The drive to conquer external nature, inherent in capitalist modernization, linked up with the tendency to liquidate the concrete object in the concept. The fu-

21. Since the publication in English of *Communication and the Evolution of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), in which the "linguistic turn" in his thought has emerged most prominently, Habermas has developed the *Diskursethik* in a number of different writings. Cf. "Diskursethik: Notizen zu einem Begründungsprogramm," in *Moralbewusstsein und kommunikatives Handeln* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983); "Über Moralität und Sittlichkeit: Was macht eine Lebensform 'rational'?" in Herbert Schnädelbach, ed., *Rationalität: Philosophische Beiträge* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984); and "Moral und Sittlichkeit: Hegels Kantkritik im Lichte der Diskursethik," *Merkur* 39:12 (December 1985); "Moralität und Sittlichkeit: Treffen Hegels Einwände gegen Kant auch auf die Diskursethik zu?" in Wolfgang Kuhlmann, ed. *Moralität und Sittlichkeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986).

22. Peter Hohendahl, "The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited: Habermas' Critique of the Frankfurt School," *New German Critique* 35 (Spring-Summer 1985) p. 5.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-16. Habermas, "The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment: Re-Reading *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," *New German Critique* 26 (Spring-Summer 1982).

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sion of reification and identity thinking gave rise to the repression of human interaction through the supremacy of instrumental reason. Resistance to social domination takes flight into pre-rational, mimetic conceptions of the "revolt of nature" or into a defense of the autonomy of the aesthetic realm, with only a tenuous relevance to practical life.[24]

This critique of Western rationalism has been renewed by French post-structuralists and post-modernists. Foucault's debt to Nietzsche is explicit: he reconstructs the rise of certain institutions in modern liberal society as an extension of power/knowledge relations to the most remote corners of everyday life. While Foucault's studies hark back to Weber's gloomiest ruminations on the "iron cage" of modern life, this totalizing critique of Western reason leaves one wondering about the role of rationality. Thus, Foucault paves the way for a radical *relativism* with respect to moral claims.

More recently, Lyotard has given some indication of the form a post-modernist ethics might take. In *Just Gaming*, he applies Wittgenstein's concept of language games to the justice. Insofar as Lyotard can be seen as having a particular ethical position (a number of statements suggest he refuses to be pinned down, which might render him susceptible to the charge that he is making *universal* claims), he doubts that moral statements have the status which Habermas says is "analogous to truth" in the empirical sciences. Lyotard's position recalls G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* and the emotivistic ethics according to which ethical statements are reduced to expressions of personal preference, and such preferences are inimical to argumentation or external standards.

In this vein, Lyotard claims: "There is a resistance, an incommensurability, I would say an irrelevancy, of the prescriptive with respect to the functions of propositional logic, that is, with respect to that which gives theoretical discourse... its authority."[25] The argument that practical and theoretical discourses are incommensurable is couched in terms of a critique of the role of theorists and intellectuals in the formation of such discourse: "The question you are asking is that of the relation between two language games: that of

24. On the political problems of Adorno's aesthetic theory, cf. G. Frederick Hunter, "Commitment and Autonomy in Art: Antinomies of Frankfurt Aesthetic Theory," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* vol. 30 (1985), pp. 41-64.

25. Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thebaud, *Just Gaming* trans. Wlad Godzich with an afterword by Samuel Weber (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 22.

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prescription and that of description (whether speculative or not)... [T]o establish a derivation between the two is to tie in with the tradition of the intellectual, with the tradition of a form of thought that is there to try to justify imperatives whatever they may be. And the fact that they may be imperatives in keeping with the dominant morality (inasmuch as there is one) or in keeping with the dominant political power, or, to the contrary, that they are oppositional imperatives, does not change one iota the fact that this is the thinking of an intellectual, that is, of someone who is there to derive prescriptions."[26] It is unclear whether Lyotard's diatribe is simply intended as a critique of intellectuals as a new class, or whether it is a call for the abdication of critical thought as such.

In any case, we end up in the same difficulty that hounds Foucault's work: the theorist becomes irrelevant. Lyotard argues — prescriptively — that prescriptive statements as such must be denied the same kind of validity which descriptive statements may deserve (apparently for no better reason than that prescriptive statements are typically made by intellectuals, a group whose moral preeminence Lyotard wishes to undercut). This argument is problematic, since it is itself, and suggests questionable affinities with the discredited logical empiricist philosophy of science. In short, Lyotard's rational arguments undermine his own analysis which rejects rational arguments in the practical sphere. Lyotard's position is incoherent; it drowns in a tangle of performative contradiction.

In his critique of Gadamer, Habermas argues that Wittgenstein interpreted linguistic competence as narrowly cognitive. Individuals do not merely learn the communication rules, because "the life-worlds that determine the grammar of language games are not closed forms of life."[27] Linguistic socialization into the life-world transfers hermeneutic understanding to other communicative contexts. Habermas' universal ethics depends precisely upon a rational reconstruction of the *forms of argumentation* that justify claims, regardless of whether those claims arise in theoretical or practical discourse. He grounds his moral theory, in other words, in a *metanarrative* of the structures of rationality underlying all human lin-

26. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

27. Habermas, "A Review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*," in Dallmayr and McCarthy, eds., *Understanding and Social Inquiry* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977, p. 339. Cf. also "The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality," in Josef Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy, and Critique* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980).

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guistic communication as such. Unlike his post-modernist antagonists, Habermas views such "metanarratives" as central to the critique of domination. As Rorty has pointed out, it is this kind of metadiscursive justification that Lyotard and other post-modernists reject. "[T]he French writers whom Habermas criticizes are willing to drop the opposition between 'true consensus' and 'false consensus,' or between 'validity' and 'power,' in order not to have to tell a metanarrative in order to explicate 'true' or 'valid.'"[28] Habermas insists we retain the standards of rationality implicit in communicative action, understood as action oriented to reaching consensus, or we are left with moral relativism.

Habermas views relativism as the central philosophical challenge to a rational legitimation of authority. He began to grow wary of the problem at least as early as his attack on "left fascism" within the German student movements of the late 1960s. His belief that the students failed to distinguish between totalitarianism and liberal constitutional democracy continues to characterize his thinking about the new social movements.[29]

MacIntyre's neo-Aristotelianism indicates a different kind of conservative impulse. Habermas calls it a "hermeneutically renewed traditionalism."[30] The claim that the Enlightenment project of a "secular morality independent from metaphysics and religion has failed"[31] justified ethical life with Hegel's notion of *Sittlichkeit*. Schnädelbach has thus analyzed neo-Aristotelianism as the "philosophical prop of our contemporary neo-conservatism" because of its proclivity "to interpret and to ground every ethics from the standpoint of a given lived ethos."[32] But the targets of MacIntyre's sociological venom are the managerial and therapeutic movements in contemporary life. These cultural manifestations treat human beings as means rather than ends. However, MacIntyre is no Kantian. He argues rather that modern culture can no longer support the classical (i.e. Aristotelian) view of man as having a *telos*, an endpoint toward which the pursuit of life is and should be oriented. The deafening ca-

28. Richard Rorty, "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity," in Richard Bernstein, ed., *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985) p. 162.

29. Jürgen Habermas, "Civil Disobedience: Litmus Test for the Democratic Constitutional State," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* vol. 30 (1985), for his comparison of the maturity of the recent peace, environmentalist, and other social movements to the "false revolutionary ideals" (p. 99) of the 1960's student movements.

30. Habermas, "Über Moralität und Sittlichkeit," *op. cit.*, p. 227.

31. Habermas, "Diskursethik," *op. cit.*, p. 53.

32. Schnädelbach, "Max Horkheimer," *op. cit.*, p. 95, n. 62. 44

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cophony of ethical views, and the stridency with which these incompatible positions are advocated, are symptomatic of a social order that can no longer sustain a coherent, defensible sense of community from which the pursuit of a good life might draw its animating force. Forms of "personal growth" are a substitute gratification for this classical pursuit.

In opposition to this traditionalism, which retreats to a premodern position, Habermas insists that we press forward and complete the modern project of rational legitimation of norms by generating the standards for such legitimation out of an appropriation of the achievements of modernity itself.[33] Moral evolution can be understood from the perspective of a social learning process. In particular, Habermas believes the acquisition of communicative competence constitutes the *via regia* by which to comprehend moral development. According to him, the structures of ordinary language offer a standpoint for a universal, cognitive ethics.

In "Labor and Interaction," Habermas showed that the Marxist notion of labor is not a standard for all social praxis. Interaction is always embedded in the context of the communication structures of the life-world, which orients the action. Here Habermas adopts Apel's notion that speech communication raises "validity claims." That is, any speech action will be comprehensible, that it will say something, that it will be uttered truthfully, and that it will be uttered in a context which the hearer also understands.[34] These four conditions of every consensual speech action provide Habermas with the foundations of discourse ethics. Thus he reformulates Kant's categorical imperative as follows: "Rather than ascribing as valid to all others any maxim that I can will to be a universal law, I must submit my maxim to all others for purposes of discursively testing its claim to universality. The emphasis shifts from what each can will without contradiction to be a general law, to what all can will in agreement to be a universal norm." The litmus test for moral maxims is thus that they must express the rationally motivated consensus of a general will, i.e., that "all valid norms must satisfy the condition that the consequences and side-effects which (predictably) result from their *gener-*

33. Habermas, "Modernity vs. Post-Modernity," *New German Critique* 22 (Winter 1981) p. 13. Cf. also Richard Bernstein's review of MacIntyre, "Nietzsche or Aristotle? Reflections on Alasdair MacIntyre's After Virtue," in Bernstein, *Philosophical Profiles* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986).

34. Jürgen Habermas, "What is Universal Pragmatics?" in *Communication and the Evolution of Society* trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979) pp. 2-3.

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al observance in the course of satisfying the interests of each and every individual could be accepted (and preferred to all known alternative possibilities for regulation) by all those concerned."[35] Habermas calls this a "fundamental principle of universalization."

In "Diskursethik," Habermas refutes ethical skeptics. Just as all speech actions implicitly raise the previously mentioned validity claims, all practical discourse entails certain "universal presuppositions of argumentation" which structurally motivate rational consensus. In particular, Habermas argues that any discussion of the validity of moral norms presupposes the participants' commitment to other norms such as the publicity of dialogue, openness in principle to participation in discussion by all those concerned in the outcome, and the renunciation of coercion as a means to achieve consensus. There procedures must obtain for a democratic process of will formation.

Habermas is adamant about the procedural, formal character of his project. He contends that participants in moral discorse always enter the discusion with commitments to certain values generated in their life-worlds. Habermas accepts the plurality of life-forms as a by-product of modernity. A substantive conception of the good life is dogmatic. Therefore, "it is more sensible to differentiate precisely between morality and *Sittlichkeit*, and to evaluate the rationality of a form of life according to the extent to which it constitutes a context which enables its members to develop moral insights guided by principles and which promotes their realization in practice."[36] Habermas wishes to defend the social learning processes of liberal democracy, as universal and legitimate, against a redemptive politics overthrowing modern rationality. Reflection is characteristic of post-conventional modes of moral reasoning, and is central to the modernity project. Habermas agrees that modern rationality has been one-sided and that cognitive and instrumental rationality have been reified at the expense of communicative reason. Cultural differentiation has brought in its train the expert control of specialized spheres and a corresponding fragmentation of consciousness among individuals. Nonetheless, Habermas contends that a theory of communicative action reconciles differentiated values.

35. "Diskursethik," p. 75-77. Habermas is actually quoting McCarthy's characterization of his position in the German version of his *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 197b) p. 326.

36. "Über Moralität und Sittlichkeit: Was macht eine Lebensform 'rational'?" *op. cit.*, p. 228.

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Habermas' formalism is at variance with Horkheimer's eudemonistic ethical standpoint. In particular, Habermas has been taken to task for developing an ethical model which: 1) presupposes counterfactuals not found in the real world (Lukes)[37]; 2) lacks an understanding of its own commitment to some conception of the good life (Taylor)[38]; 3) is useless as a moral theory (though not as an "ethics of citizenship") because its assumption of the common values of the participants in practical discourse effectively begs the question the discourse ethics is supposed to resolve (Heller)[39]; and 4) fails, with its Kantian categories of autonomy and justice, to take adequate account of authenticity, which orients us toward a good life as a "coherent narrative."[40] I will here concentrate on two commentators who echo Horkheimer's concerns.

Whitebook has examined the role of psychoanalysis in Critical Theory. According to him, the Freudian instinct theory was a means by which to integrate a eudemonistic moment into the Marxist critique of capitalist society. He argues that while Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse placed increasing emphasis on the realization of happiness in the form of a reconciliation with inner and outer nature, this stress led them to oppose a reified instrumental rationality to the emancipatory demands of instinctual needs. But on the psychoanalytic model they appropriated, the internalization of paternal authority was the necessary precondition for an ego identity capable of withstanding the incessant onslaught of totalitarian domination. Despite this problem, the concern for individual happiness constituted a dominant motif in the early Frankfurt School, as is clear in Horkheimer's essay on morality.

In contrast, Habermas separates questions of justice and happiness. "His passion is for justice"; the matter of happiness "is more of a secondary concern... which is introduced into a theory that is basically external to it."[41] Habermas' effort to include happiness occurs in the context of his critique of Kohlberg. He agrees that

37. Steven Lukes, "Of Gods and Demons: Habermas and Practical Reason," in Thompson and Held, eds., *Habermas: Critical Debates* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982) pp. 134-148.

38. This position was adopted by Charles Taylor in a lecture on contemporary moral theories in the Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley, in March 1986.

39. Agnes Heller, "The Discourse Ethics of Habermas: Critique and Appraisal," *Thesis Eleven* No. 10/11 (Nov. 1984/March 1985) pp. 5-17.

40. Alessandro Ferrara, "A Critique of Habermas' Diskursethik," *Telos* 64 (Summer 1985) p. 68.

41. Whitebook, "Reason and Happiness: Some Psychoanalytic Themes in Critical Theory," in *Habermas and Modernity, op. cit.*, p. 152.

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Kohlberg's theory is vital to a rational reconstruction of moral reasoning. But he feels that Kohlberg's Stage 6 of post-conventional moral development leaves certain crucial issues unaddressed. Kohlberg analyzes only the formal developmental conditions for ego autonomy. "In so doing, Kohlberg, like Kant, absolutizes the conflict between inclination and understanding."[42] As long as instinctual needs remain tradition-bound and pre-linguistic, the utopian potential of "inner nature" must be repressed. Habermas rejects Kohlberg's formal interpretation of autonomy. "Autonomy that robs the ego of a communicative access to its own inner nature also signals unfreedom. Ego identity means a freedom that limits itself in the intention of reconciling — if not of identifying — worthiness with happiness."[43] Whitebook, however, is concerned that Habermas' stress on the "linguistic"aspects of internal nature will eradicate the conflict, so central to Freud's thought, between reason and desire.

As a result of the apparently strict demarcation between "reason and happiness," Whitebook argues, "he is forced to entertain the possibility that a future society may be emancipated with respect to morality and justice, and, at the same time, not be happy, as it were."[44] By constructing his defense of rationalism exclusively in terms of *formal* rationality, Habermas is left in the peculiar position of championing the progress of modern society in respect of moral reflexivity, despite the fact that the ideals which played midwife to the emergence of this society have yet to be realized.[45] The freedom, equality, and social justice for which Horkheimer yearned in "Materialism and Morality" are still far from being attained. By relegating the matter of happiness to a subordinate status in his moral theory, Habermas abandons the utopianism which drove Critical Theory's

42. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

43. Habermas, "Moral Development and Ego Identity," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

44. Whitebook, "Reason and Happiness," op. cit., p. 158.

45. Habermas has also made the rather remarkable statement that "[B]ourgeois consciousness has become cynical... it has been thoroughly emptied of binding normative contents. However, if (as becomes more apparent in times of recession) the bourgeois ideals have gone into retirement, there are no norms and values to which an immanent critique might appeal with (the expectation of) agreement." ("Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures," in *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, p. 97.) This passage suggests a decisive break with the sort of immanent critique characteristic of his Frankfurt predecessors. If it is true, to what norms can we appeal?

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critique of late capitalism. Whitebook suggests that reason and happiness are so far apart in Habermas' discourse ethics that they can not be reintegrated in an emancipatory politics.[46]

Benhabib also attacks Habermas' ethical formalism, in a slightly different form. She too focuses on Habermas' tentative statements regarding the "communicative fluidity" of need interpretations in "Moral Development and Ego Identity," but she doesn't share Whitebook's concern that such an emphasis threatens to undermine the liberatory possibilities located at the boundary between reason and instinct. On Benhabib's interpretation, a direct line, separating reason and duty from needs and happiness, can be drawn from Hobbes through Kant to Rawls. Habermas' argument asserts the primacy of formal rights against the good life.

According to Benhabib, Habermas' conception of a discourse ethics nonetheless contains a radical perspective in virtue of "the assumption that needs and their interpretations belong to the center of moral discourse."[47] This utopian perspective is suppressed in Habermas' construction of the theory, however, because he systematically favors an abstract, liberal orientation to rights over a concrete, transformative orientation to happiness. "Habermas does not thematize this utopian dimension adequately," she argues, "for, following George Herbert Mead, he assumes the standpoint of the 'generalized other,' of rights and entitlements, to represent the moral point of view par excellence."[48] Habermas does not do justice to his own earlier argument that ego identity develops in the context of social interaction, and is therefore not the property of individual rights and obligations. Habermas' ideal of autonomy envisages both self-determination and self-actualization.

But, Benhabib argues, the ego-centered notion of identity implicit in Habermas is inadequate to self-actualization. Consensus is achieved only in discussion with "concrete others" who bring with them their finite, historical, sensuous needs. To Habermas' ideal

46. More recently, Whitebook has sought to distance himself decisively from the "politics of redemption" that implicitly flow from the totalizing critique of reason developed by Horkheimer and Adorno and which, he claims, are the explicit tendency of the "Left Counter-Enlightenment." Cf. Whitebook, "The Politics of Redemption," *Telos* 63 (Spring 1985). See also the responses to Whitebook by Paul Breines, Richard Wolin, and Moishe Gonzales in *Telos* 65 (Fall 1985).

47. Benhabib, "Modernity and the Aporias of Critical Theory," *Telos* 49 (Fall 1981) p. 56.

48. Benhabib, "The Utopian Dimension in Communicative Ethics," *New German Critique* 35 (Spring/Summer 1985) p. 92.

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speech situation, Benhabib counterposes "symmetrical reciprocity," which replaces the abstract from individuals of natural law theories with "complementary reciprocity," in which "each is entitled to expect and to assume from the other forms of behavior through which the other feels recognized and confirmed as a concrete, individual being with specific needs, talents, and capacities."[49] The utopian horizon of ethics is solidarity, care, and sympathy.

Due to Habermas' defense of rationalism against postmodernism, his discourse ethics forgets the central theoretical impulse of Critical Theory. Habermas criticizes the apocalyptic thesis of "the end of the individual," and Critical Theory's political pessimism and turned emancipation into a private matter "achieved in the non-denominating relation with nature and in moments of reevolutionary eros."[50] But is moral formalism the farthest an ethical theorist can go with modern pluralism?

Horkheimer's concern with concrete, individual happiness as the *summum bonum* of moral philosophy resists Habermas' rationalization. The satisfaction of needs, a demand which admits of no "purely theoretical grounding," is what constitutes Horkheimer's critique. In Horkheimer the utopian hope for an end to morality rests on a socialized humanity because human material and sensual needs are the source of moral demands and the equitable distribution of social wealth heralds the obsolescence of morality. For Habermas, on the contrary, morality is a communicative organization of social life according to universal principles and remains a necessary part of any future society. But we can and should talk about the *material conditions* and forms of solidarity of the good life, as well as the formal principles of argumentation which motivate rational consensus on potentially universal norms.

In a recent statement regarding the status of the discourse ethics, Habermas recognizes the force of these criticisms. In response to his critics (especially Whitebook), he indicates that the determination of the *necessary conditions* of a good life indeed fall within the purview of moral philosophy, though he persists in the view that the substance of such a life is solely a matter for the participants in practical discourse to establish. He realizes, however, that "moral questions transform themselves into questions of political ethics wherever the existing conditions [he cites impoverishment, indignity, and degra-

49. *Ibid.*, p. 93-94.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

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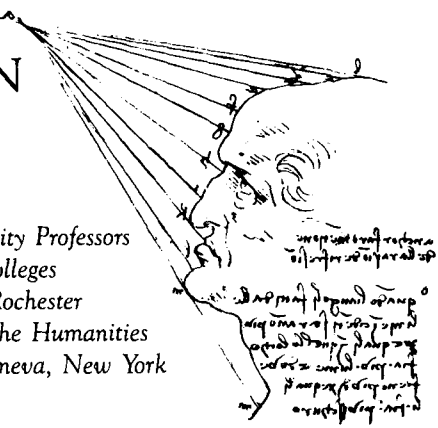
dation] make a mockery of the demands of a universal morality."[51] Under these circumstances, he argues, the limited capacity of philosophical ethics may be disappointing, but also a challenge: "philosophy absolves no one of practical responsibility."[52] In the face of today's gross injustices and inequalities, we can expect more, Habermas thinks, from the social sciences than from moral philosophy.

51. Habermas, "Moral und Sittlichkeit: Hegels Kantkritik im Lichte der Diskursethik," *op. cit.*, p. 1051.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 1052

THEORY AND INTERPRETATION IN THE VISUAL ARTS



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Materialism and Morality

Max Horkheimer

That human beings autonomously attempt to decide whether their actions are good or evil appears to be a late historical phenomenon.[1] A highly-developed European individual can bring into the light of clear consciousness and morally evaluate not just important decisions, but also those primarily instinctual and habitual reactions of which his life for the most part consists. However, human actions appear more compulsive as their subjects belong to earlier historical formations. The capacity to subject instinctual reactions to moral criticism and to change them on the basis of individual considerations could only develop with the growing differentiation of society. Even the authority principle of the Middle Ages, the undermining of which marks the starting-point of modern moral inquiry, is an expression of a later phase of this process. The unbroken religious faith which preceded the dominance of this principle was an already tremendously complicated mediation between naive experience and instinctual reaction; therefore, the medieval criterion of tradition sanctioned by the church (whose exclusive validity surely still carried a strongly compulsive character) already indicates a moral conflict.

Originally published in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, II/2 (1933), pp. 162-195. Translated by G. Frederick Hunter and John Torpey.

1. Translators' comment on some terms in the article: *Allgemeinheit*: As used by Horkheimer, this term usually has a triple meaning that encompasses the Kantian "universality," the Hegelian "generality," and the more common meaning "society at large." Where the term contains all three of these aspects (which in "Materialism and Morality" is most of the time), it has been rendered as "generality." The term is thus quasi-technical in the translation, since it connotes "society at large" much more weakly than does "*Allgemeinheit*." It is nevertheless the least distorting among the possible choices; where the term more strongly has one of the other connotations, it has been rendered either as "universality" or "society at large."
Aufheben: The choice for the translator in regard to this bugaboo is to either render it according to whether it is used "positively" (supercede, transcend) or "negatively" (annul, abolish), or to pick one term and render it consistently. Although the former

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When Augustine[2] declares: "*Ego vero evangelio non crederum misi me catholicae ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas*," this affirmation already presupposes — as Dilthey[3] recognized — a doubting of faith. The social life-process of the modern period has presently so advanced human powers that at least the members of certain strata in the most developed countries are capable, in a relatively wide range of their exist-

alternative is often chosen by translators of material from the Hegelian and Marxist traditions, we have opted for the latter alternative and have chosen the homely "sublate" or "sublation" wherever it has the Hegelian/Marxist shading, which it most often does. Although this technical term was once derided as "baroque" in this journal, none of the other available renderings in English carry both the positive and negative senses of the term (supersession comes the closest, but still connotes neither the *preservation* of contradiction at a higher level of unity, nor any sense of annulment) or sustains this unity in opposition across contexts. Cf. *The Logic of Hegel* [the *Lesser Logic*, tr. Wm. Wallace, 2nd ed., London, 1904, p. 180, and *The Science of Logic,* tr. A.V. Miller, London, 1969, pp. 106f.]

Gebot: In light of Kant's use of the term, we find the usual "precept" (Beck's choice) too weak and "command" (Paton's choice) too imprecise. *Ein Gebot* has the character of a *law*, with all the connotations of universality that this term has in Kant. Neither "precept" nor "command" catches this. At one point in the *Grundlegung*, Kant in fact equates "*Gesetze*" and "*Gebote*" (Akadamie-Ausgabe, p. 416). We therefore have adopted the term "commandment," which is also the rendering in the English abstract of "*Materialismus und Moral*" that is appended to the original in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*. Although the German "*Gebot*" does not inherently have the strong biblical connotation of "commandment," neither do we feel this connotation to be completely off the mark, either. The term "precept" we have reserved for "[*moralische*] *Vorschrift*."

Moral: In the abovementioned English abstract of "*Materialismus und Moral*," the title is rendered "Materialism and Ethics." However, Horkheimer consistently distinguishes *Ethik* from *Moral* in the article; while both could be rendered as "moral philosophy," only the latter retains the connotation of a moment in the totality, and since this is the primary focus of the article, we have retained this distinction and always rendered derivatives of *Ethik* as "ethics" or "ethical," and *Moral* as "morality" or "moral philosophy."

moralisches Gefühl: In their translations of Kant's *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, both H.J. Paton and L.W. Beck render this as "moral feeling." Yet the term in German is Kant's own rendering of "moral sentiment," the term used by the Scottish moralists, whose "heteronomous" ethical theories Kant is (often only implicitly) criticizing in the *Grundlegung*; we have thus always rendered it as "moral sentiment" (which is also the rendering that appears in the *ZfS*'s abstract mentioned above).

Wissenschaft: "Science" is always a translation of *Wissenschaft*, but this latter term can also mean "scholarship," "knowledge," etc., depending on the context. Its connotations are as philosophical and humanities-oriented as they are "scientistic," which should be borne in mind as the word "science" is encountered in the article.

2. C. ep. Manich. 6.

3. Cf. *Gesammelte Schriften [Collected Writings]* vol. II, Leipzig and Berlin, 1921, p. 110 ff.

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ence, of not merely following instinct or habit, but of choosing autonomously among several possible aims. The exercise of this capacity admittedly takes place on a much smaller scale than is commonly believed. Even if the deliberations concerning the technique and the means which should be applied to a given purpose have become extremely refined in many areas of social and individual life, the aims of human beings nonetheless continue to be rigidly fixed. Precisely in those actions which in their totality are socially and historically significant, human beings in general behave in a quite typical manner, that is, in conformity with a definite scheme of motives which are characteristic of their social group. Only in non-essential, private affairs do people occasionally examine their motives conscientiously and apply their intellectual powers to the determination of goals. Within contemporary society and especially among younger people, nonetheless, proper goals have been energetically questioned. As the principle of authority was undermined and a significant number of individuals acquired substantial decision-making power over the conduct of their lives, the need emerged for a spiritual guideline which could substitute for this principle's eroding bases in orienting the individual in this world. The acquisition of moral principles was important for members of the higher social strata, since their position constantly demanded that they make intervening decisions of which they had earlier been absolved by authority. At the same time, a rationally grounded morality for the purpose of dominating the masses in the state became all the more necessary when a mode of action that diverged from the their life-interests was demanded of them.

The idealist philosophers of the modern period met this need through axiomatic construction. In accordance with the conditions which, since the Renaissance, force the individual back upon himself, they sought to authenticate these maxims with reason — that is, with reasons that are in principle generally accessible. As distinctive as the systems of Leibniz, Spinoza, and of the Enlightenment may be, they all bear the marks of an effort to justify a particular kind of behavior as that which is proper for all times on the basis of the eternal constitution of the world and of the individual. They therefore make a claim to unconditional validity. Those standards characterized as correct are admittedly quite general for the most part and offer — with the exception of several materialist and militant theories of the French Enlightenment — few definite directives. In the last centuries, life has demanded too much capacity for conformity to

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both religion and morality for substantively elaborated precepts to preserve even the appearance of permanence. Even modern moral philosophers who decisively attack the formalism of earlier moral teachings hardly diverge from them in this respect. "Ethics does not teach directly what ought here and now to happen in any given case," writes Nicolai Hartmann,[4] "but in general how that is constituted which ought to happen universally.... Ethics furnishes the bird's-eye view from which the actual can be seen objectively." Idealist moral philosophy purchases the belief in its own unconditionality by taking no position with respect to an historical moment. It does not take sides. Though its perceptions may accord perfectly well with or even benefit a group of individuals in collective historical struggle, it nonetheless prescribes no position. Hartmann declares: "What a man ought to do, when he is confronted with a serious conflict that is fraught with responsibility, is this: to decide according to his best conscience; that is, according to his own living sense of the relative height of the respective values..."[5] Ethics "does not mix itself up with the conflicts of life, gives no precepts coined *ad hoc*; it is no code, as law is, of commandments and prohibitions. It turns its attention directly to the creative in man, challenges it afresh in every new case to observe, to divine, as it were, what ought here and now to happen."[6] Morality is understood in this connection as an eternal category. The judgment of character and actions as good or evil should always be possible, just as judging statements true or false, or objective forms beautiful or ugly is part of the human essence. Despite the most vigorous discussions concerning the possibility or impossibility of an eternal morality, more recent philosophers understand one another's concepts. The mutability of the content, the innate quality of certain statements is asserted and contested, but the capacity for moral value judgments as a rule is held to be an essential characteristic of human nature of at least equal rank with that of theoretical knowledge [*Erkenntnis*]. A new category of virtue has entered philosophy since the Renaissance: moral virtue. It has little in common with either the ethical conceptions of the Greeks, which concerned the best path to happiness, or the religious ethics of the Middle Ages. Although connections exist between it and these phenomena, the fundamental feature of the modern problem of morality has its roots in the bourgeois order. Insofar as certain

4. Nicolai Hartmann, *Ethics*, vol. 1, tr. Stanton Coit, London, 1932, p. 29.
5. Nicolai Hartmann, *Ethics*, vol. 2, tr. Stanton Coit, London, 1932, p. 285.
6. *Ethics*, vol. 1, p. 30.

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economic elements of that order are found in earlier societies, aspects of this problem appear in them as well; morality can itself, however, only be understood from the standpoint of the general life situation of the epoch now about to end.

The moral conception of the bourgeoisie came to its purest expression in Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative. "Act only according to that maxim by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."[7] According to Kant, actions which conform to this principle and which occur immediately for its sake distinguish themselves from all others through the quality of morality. He himself explained wherein "the specific mark"[8] distinguishing this imperative from all other rules of action could be sought: in the "renunciation of all interest." Even if reason itself takes a pure and immediate interest in moral actions,[9] they do not occur out of an interest in the object, nor out of necessity. Acting out of duty is contrasted with acting out of interest. Virtue does not consist in acting contrary to one's individual purposes, but rather independently of them. The individual should liberate himself from his interest.

As is well known, Kant's view was contested from various directions, including Schiller and Schleiermacher. Interest-free action was even declared impossible. "[W]hat is an interest other than the working of a motive upon the Will? Therefore where a motive moves the Will, there the latter has an interest; but where the Will is affected by no motive, there in truth it can be as little active, as a stone is able to leave its place without being pushed or pulled," says Schopenhauer.[10] Certainly Kant did not want moral action understood as action without motive, even if he viewed acting out of interest as the natural law of human beings. On the contrary, the moral impulsion[11] lies in respect for the moral law [*Sittengesetz*]. But Schopenhauer's critique, which he transformed positively [*ins Positive*] through the construction of his own ethics, hits one thing on the

7. Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, tr. Louis White Beck, New York, 1959, p. 39.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 67ff.

10. Schopenhauer, *The Basis of Morality*, tr. Author B. Bullock, London, 1915, p. 99.

11. [Translators' note: "moralisch Triebfeder" — in Kant's own technical language, this is actually a contradiction in terms; cf. *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Ak. Aus. p. 63. "Impulsion" follows Paton's rendering in his translation of the *Grundlegung*: Beck renders this as "incentive," but also recommends "urge."]

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mark: to the moral agent in the Kantian sense, the actual reasons for action remain obscure. The reason that the general should stand above the particular is unknown to him, nor is it clear how in the individual harmony is to be achieved between them. The imperative, which "of itself finds entrance into the mind and yet gains reluctant reverence (though not always obedience)"[12] leaves the individual in a certain uneasiness and unclarity. In his soul, a struggle plays itself out between personal interest and the vague conception of a general interest, between individual and general objectives. Yet it remains obscure how a rational decision according to criteria is possible between the two. There arises an endless reflection and constant turmoil which in principle is not to be overcome. Because this problematic, which plays itself out in the inner lives of human beings, necessarily derives from their role in the social life-process, the Kantian philosophy, as its faithful reflection, is a consummate expression of its age.

The foundation of this spiritual [*seelische*] situation is easily recognized upon consideration of the structure of the bourgeois order. The social whole lives through unleashing the possessive instincts of all individuals. The whole is maintained insofar as they concern themselves with profit, with the conservation and multiplication of their own property. Each is left to care for himself as best he can. But because thereby he must produce things that others need, the general needs are fulfilled through activities which are apparently independent of one another and which only seem to serve the individual's own welfare. The fact that in this order the production of total social needs coincides with the subjects' striving after possessions has stamped the psychic apparatus of its members. In all epochs, human beings have accommodated themselves in their entire being to the life-conditions of society: a consequence of this accommodation in the modern period is that human powers orient themselves to the promotion of individual advantage. Neither the feelings of the individual nor his consciousness, neither the form of his happiness nor his conception of God escape this life-dominating principle. Even in the most refined and seemingly remote impulses of the individual, the function bringing these to bear in society still makes itself felt. In this era, economic advantage is the natural law under which individual life proceeds. To this natural law of individuals, the categorical imperative holds up the "general natural law," the law [*Lebensgesetz*]

12. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*. tr. L.W. Beck, Indianapolis, 1956, p. 89.

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of human society as a standard of comparison. This would be meaningless unless particular interests and the needs of the generality intersected, not highly imperfectly, but necessarily. That this does not occur, however, is the inadequacy of the bourgeois economic form: there exists no rational connection between the free competition of individuals as the mediating and the existence of the entire society as the mediated. The process takes place not under the control of a conscious will, but as a natural occurrence. The life of the generality arises blindly, accidentally, and badly out of the chaotic activity of individuals, industries, and states. This irrationality expresses itself in the suffering of the majority of all human beings. The individual, completely absorbed in the concern for himself and "his own," thus promotes the life of the whole not merely without clear consciousness; rather, through his labor he effects both the welfare and the misery of others. It never becomes apparent to what extent and for which individuals his labor means the one or the other. No unambiguous connection can be drawn between one's own labor and larger social considerations. This problem, which only society itself could rationally solve through the systematic incorporation of each member into a consciously directed labor process, manifests itself in the bourgeois epoch as a conflict in the inner life of its subjects.

To be sure, with the liberation of the individual from the overarching unities of the Middle Ages, the individual acquired the consciousness of itself as an independent being. This self-consciousness is, however, abstract: the manner in which each individual contributes to the workings of the entire society through his labor, and is at the same time influenced by it, remains completely obscure. All of them cooperate in the good or bad development of the entire society, and yet it appears as a natural occurrence. One's role in this whole, without which the essence of the individual cannot be determined, cannot be perceived. Hence each necessarily has a false consciousness about his existence, which he is able to comprehend only in psychological categories as the sum of supposedly free decisions. Given the lack of a rational organization of the social whole that his labor benefits, he cannot recognize himself in his true connection to it and knows himself only as an individual whom the whole affects somewhat, without it ever becoming clear how and how much his egoistic activity actually affects it. The whole thus appears as an admonition, as a demand, and troubles precisely the progressive indi-

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viduals at their labor, in the call of conscience and in moral deliberation.[13]

Materialism reveals — and not so generally as was just suggested, but paying particular heed to the various periods and social classes — the actual relationships from which the moral problems are derived and reflected, if only in a distorted fashion, in the doctrines of moral philosophy. The idea of morality, as it was formulated by Kant, contains the truth that the mode of action informed by the natural law of economic advantage is not necessarily the rational mode. It does not, as might be supposed, oppose the interest of the individual to feelings or even to the return to blind obedience; neither interest nor reason is maligned, but instead reason recognizes that it need not exclusively serve the natural law, i.e., individual advantage, when it has absorbed the natural law of the whole into its will. The individual, of course, cannot fulfill the demand to rationally shape the whole. Mastery of the overall process of society by human beings can only be achieved when it has overcome its anarchic form and constituted itself as a real subject — that is, through historical deed. Such a deed issues not from the individual, but rather from a constellation of social groups, in the dynamics of which conscience certainly plays an important role. Moral anxiety by no means burdens the labor of individuals in the production process alone; their entire being is affected by it. Whenever human beings follow the law which is natural to them in this society, they attend immediately only to the affairs of the subject of interests which bears their name. The reason of the bourgeois individual extends beyond his particular purposes, insofar as he is not just this determinate X with his private worries and wishes, but, at the same time, one who can ask himself what concern these worries of X actually are to him even as they immediately affect his personal existence — insofar, that is, as he is not this mere X but rather a member of human society — the "autonomous" will of Kant's commandment stirs within him. As Kant consistently argued,[14] the interest of another is in this connection equally contingent as one's own, for the relation of the strivings of Y to life of the

13. The psychological theory of conscience, as developed for example by Freud in his work *The Ego and the Id*, (tr. James Strachey, New York, 1960, pp. 18ff., esp. p. 27), is thoroughly reconcilable with this explanation. Psychology provides knowledge about the mechanism by which the predisposition for morality reproduces itself and strikes firm roots in the individual. The ground of existence of this mechanism, however, lies deeper than in the individual soul.

14. Cf. e.g., *Foundations*, p. 51.

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generality is for X, as a rule, no more transparent than his own. Whoever, in the economic situation of the bourgeois, is incapable of experiencing the whole conflict is retarded in his development; he lacks a type of reaction which belongs to individuals of this period.

Therefore, morality is not simply dismissed by materialism as mere ideology or false consciousness. Rather it is understood as a human phenomenon which is not to be overcome for the duration of the bourgeois epoch. Its philosophical expression, however, is in many respects distorted. Above all, the solution of the problem does not lie in the observance of rigidly formulated commandments. In attempting to apply the Kantian imperative it quickly becomes clear that the generality with which the moral will is concerned would not be helped in the least. Even if all were to observe it, even if all were to lead a virtuous life in its sense, the same confusion would reign. Nothing essential would be changed.

Kant's four examples of moral action place this helplessness and powerlessness of the good will in bold relief: in the first, a desperate man turns away from suicide in consideration of the moral law. His decision to reject suicide is so dubious, however, that the reader is astonished that Kant does not seriously pursue it. Why should a person "who, through a series of misfortunes which has grown into hopelessness, tires of this life,"[15] not at the same time be able to will that the maxim of this action become a universal law? Is not this world in such a condition that a rational actor would perceive the possibility of that escape route as a consolation? Hume's essay on suicide, in which he proves himself a true Enlightenment figure, while written and published long before the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, nonetheless serves as a response to Kant's peculiar opinion. "A man, who retires from life," he says, "does no harm to society: He only ceases to do good; which, if it is an injury, is of the lowest kind.... But suppose that it is no longer in my power to promote the interest of society; suppose that I am a burthen to it; suppose that my life hinders some person from being much more useful to society. In such cases my resignation of life must not only be innocent but laudable. And most people who lie under any temptation to abandon existence, are in some such situation; those, who have health, or power, or authority, have commonly better reason to be in humour with the world."[16] Kant's deliberations, which take no notice of the con-

15. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

16. Hume, "On Suicide," in Hume's *Ethical Writings*, ed. Alasdair MacIntyre, London, 1965, pp. 304-305.

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tradictions in society, seem quite lame in comparison with this voice!

In the second example, someone avoids obtaining money by the false promise of later repayment. Kant has him morally reflect that if everyone were to do this, in the end no promise would be taken seriously. In order to evaluate this example, it would be necessary to know the purpose for the money and the relationship between the two contracting parties. Sometimes Kant defends his moral solution with as much artificiality as when he discusses reasons for lying.[17] In the third example, the disregard for reality proves more ominous than in the first. A rich man finds in himself a certain talent, but is too indolent to develop it. Kant says that he could not possibly want all others to remain idle in his situation, and that he therefore must undergo the effort. But, contrary to Kant's view, the will of the gifted man would dissuade him from summoning all of the competitors (if any are present) in one arena. In the context of a competitive society, if he should decide to subject himself to the school of hard knocks, he must wish precisely that his will does not become a universal rule. The fourth example deals with charity. Kant recommends it not on the basis of respecting the moral law but with the not very persuasive argument that even a rich person may require charity someday. If this example is supposed to concern not a few measly pennies but rather a really tempting amount, the rich person would do right to prefer the secure present to the questionable future. But if this problem is considered not egoistically, but rather morally in the Kantian sense — that is, with a view to universality — then the rich person's theory regarding what is good for society at large will be quite different from that of the beggar: the former will declare with the utmost sincerity that large contributions are detrimental. If it concerns higher matters, such as taxes [*soziale Lasten*] or wages, then there will be as many beliefs about what befits universal law as social groups.

That each acts according to his conscience is not enough to put an end either to the chaos or to the resulting misery. The formal directive that one should remain pure and have a will without contradiction does not constitute a standard that could remove the basis of moral uneasiness. Is there no misdeed that has been committed at some time or other in all good conscience? It is not whether individuals consider their action reconcilable with the universal law of nature [*Naturgesetz der Allgemeinheit*], but the extent to which it is actually

17. Cf. Kant, Akademie-Ausgabe, vol. 8, pp. 425 ff. ["Über ein vermeintliches Recht, aus Menschenliebe zu lügen"].

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reconcilable with it that is decisive for the happiness of humanity. The belief that a good will — as important a motive as this may be — is the highest Good, i.e., the evaluation of an action only according to its intent and not also according to what it means in the given historical moment, is an idealist illusion. From this ideological side of the Kantian conception of morality a direct path leads to the modern mysticism of sacrifice and obedience, which otherwise only unjustly lays claim to Kant's authority. If the development and happy employment of social powers is the highest aim, it is not enough to see to a virtuous soul [*Innere*] or to the mere intellect — for instance, to suppress the instinct for acquisition through discipline — but to see the achievement of the external arrangements which can bring about happiness. What is important is not just how men do things, but what they do: precisely when the chips are down, the motives of those who pursue a goal matter less than that they achieve it. Of course, the object and situation of action involve the soul of the acting individual, for the internal and the external are as much moments of the historical dialectic as they are of the life of individuals. But the prevalent tendency in bourgeois morality to lay exclusive value upon conviction proves to be a position that inhibits progress, especially in the present. Not conscious of duty, enthusiasm, and sacrifice *as such*, but conscious of duty, enthusiasm and sacrifice *for what* decides the fate of humanity in the face of the prevailing peril. A will that is prepared to sacrifice may clearly become a good tool in the service of any power, even the most reactionary; the relation of its content to the entire society, however, is not given by conscience but by the correct theory.

This idealist trait, according to which the world would be in order as long as everything were in order in Spirit, lacks a distinction between fantasy and reality. Idealist philosophy proves itself to be a refined form of the primitive belief in the omnipotence of thought — that is, magic — but it comprises only one side of Kant's teaching. Kantianism has a very active relation to reality. As we have shown above, the categorical imperative cannot be meaningfully realized in a society of isolated individuals. Its necessary implication is thus the transformation of this society. The individual to whom the imperative appeals and whose shaping is its sole aim, would also have to disappear. Bourgeois morality points beyond the order upon which it first becomes possible and necessary. If people want to act in such a way that their maxim is fit to become universal law, they must bring about an order in which this consideration does not remain as

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dubious as in the cases enumerated by Kant, but rather in which it can really be carried out according to criteria. Society must then be constructed so that it establishes its own interests and those of all its members in a rational fashion: only under this condition is it meaningful for the individual, who finds himself involved in such a project subjectively and objectively, to organize his life on this basis. If in modern ethics the negative characteristics of Kant's view — namely the transformation-hindering subjectivism — is developed instead of this dynamic trait which points beyond the given relations, then the reason for this lies less with Kant than in subsequent history.

The Kantian doctrine does contain the impossible concept of an eternal commandment addressed to free subjects, but it also anticipates the end of morality. Therein is expressed the contradiction with which the bourgeoisie had been saddled throughout its entire epoch: it created and clung to an order which is in tension with its own concept of reason. Kant asserts the absoluteness of morality and must necessarily proclaim its transcendence, must view it as transitory. Morality rests upon the distinction between interest and duty. The task of reconciling both was put to bourgeois society by its protagonists, but the philosophical exponents of "enlightened self-interest" (Bentham) hardly dared to declare it fulfilled. This fulfillment is impossible in the prevailing form of society, for in it humanity has neither voice nor consciousness, except perhaps in theory which, in contradiction to public opinion, criticizes particular interests that pretend to be universal. The doctrine that the precondition of morality in the bourgeois sense, the distinction between particular and general interests, could be dissolved by historical action had been a part of early bourgeois materialist anthropology. Helvetius held that[18] one can "only make men happy if one reconciles their personal interest with the general. Under the condition of this principle it is apparent that morality is only a vain science if it is not fused with politics and legislation, from which I conclude that the philosophers must consider matters from the same standpoint as the legislator if they want to prove useful. Without, of course, being animated by the same spirit. The concern of the moralist is to fashion the laws; the legislator secures their execution by impressing upon them the seal of his power." Kant also considered the reconciliation of happiness and duty to be possible in a better society. There is for him "no con-

18. "De L'Esprit," *Oeuvres complètes*, Part I (London, 1780) p. 206.

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flict of practice with theory,"[19] "the pure principles of right have objective reality, i.e., they may be applied."[20] It is his conviction that the true task of politics is to "accord with the public's universal end, happiness,"[21] even though political maxims may not "be derived from the welfare or happiness which a single state expects from obedience to them, and thus not from the end which one of them proposes for itself."[22] Accordingly, neither a single state nor any power group may make itself the universal. In the last analysis, according to Kant, genuine politics is concerned not with the reconciliation of individual interests with those of such particularities, but rather with the achievement of the end whose principle is given through pure reason. If he preferred to define this end not as the condition of the greatest possible happiness, but as the constitution of the greatest human freedom according to laws,[23] he did not allow any contradiction between freedom and happiness but declared that one follows from the other. Kant always emphasized the fundamental distinction between interest and duty not with respect to the perfected order itself, but rather with respect to the human beings which aspire to it. In society, viewed as an end, the purposes of any given individual could exist together with those of all the others; in it, the private purposes of the individuals might be different with respect to their content, but there need be no necessary mutual obstruction. Moral action would coincide with the natural law, or in any case would not lead to conflict with it. Despite clear phrases about the possibility of this future society, Kant wavered regarding the extent of its realization [*Verwirklichung*]; in the formulation of the *Critique of Pure Reason* it was his conviction that the realization [*Durchführung*] of the ideal can "pass beyond any and every specified limit."[24] He had harsh words for so-called "politic" men, who pride themselves on their praxis but who in reality only fawn on the powers that be, because they claimed that human nature precludes the possibility of improvement in the Idea. To them, "the legal constitution in force at any time is...the best, but when it is amended from above, this

19. Kant, "Perpetual Peace," in *On History*, ed. Louis White Beck, New York, 1963, p. 117.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

23. Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tr. Norman Kemp Smith, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1965, p. 312.

24. *Ibid.*

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amendment always seems best, too."[25] The philosopher does not skeptically refer to how he "knows men," but rather knows "Man" and knows "what can be made of him."[26] There is no valid objection of anthropology against the overcoming of bad social relations. Kant's arguments against the psychological defense of absolutism are valid for every epoch in which the human sciences (among other sciences) are exploited for the struggle against progress. What Schopenhauer called the "setting up [of] a moral utopia"[27] — the fulfillment of morality and simultaneously its overcoming — is for Kant no illusion, but the goal of politics.

Kant's philosophy reveals utopian elements: they lie not in the idea of a perfect constitution, but rather in his undialectical conception of a continuous approach to it. According to his conviction, all determinations of bourgeois society return to themselves as identical in that final state; only they are better reconciled with each other than in the present. Even Kant regards the categories[28] of the prevailing system as eternal. The order he postulates as a goal would be composed of autonomously acting individuals whose individual decisions smoothly yield the welfare of the whole. This ideal is indeed a utopia; as in every utopia, the yearning thought forms a beautiful vision from the unchanged elements of the present. The harmony of the interests of all in Kant's utopia can only be understood as a preestablished harmony, as a charitable miracle. In contrast, science takes account of the fact that historical transformation also changes the elements of the earlier condition at the same time.

The materialist theory of society overcomes the utopian character of Kant's conception of a perfect constitution. After all, the disparate interests of individuals are not ultimate facts; they have their basis not in an independent psychological constitution, but in the material relations and total social situation of the individual. The absolutely incommensurable disparity of interests derives from the disparity of ownership; human beings today stand against one another as functions of various economic powers, of which each reveals to the other contradictory developmental tendencies. Only when this antagonistic economic form, the introduction of which once meant tremen-

25. "Perpetual Peace," p. 121. [Translators' note: in the original, Horkheimer cites p. 370 of the Ak. Aus.; in fact, the passage is to be found on p. 373 of the same.]

26. *Ibid.*

27. Schopenhauer, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

28. [Translators' note: reading the "*Kategorie*" of the original as "*Kategorien*."]

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dous progress (including among others things the developmental possibility of self-conscious human beings), has been replaced by a society in which productive property is administered in the general interest, not just from "good intentions" but with rational necessity, will the concordance of individual ends stop appearing miraculous. Individuals will then cease to be merely the exponents of private ends. Each is no longer simply a monad, but rather, in Kant's language, a "joint" or "limb" of society at large [*ein "Glied" der Allgemeinheit*].

This expression, which characterizes a dynamic element in the moral phenomenon pointing beyond itself to a more rational society, has an unhappy function in modern sociology. It is supposed to prompt human beings, who despair of this mechanism run amok that is contemporary society, to give themselves over blindly to the particular "whole" into whose realm they have fallen by birth or by fate, regardless of the role it happens to play in human history. The organological expression in this connection is understood in a way that runs precisely counter to Kant. Instead of referring to an era in which human relations will really be governed by reason, it points toward outmoded levels of society in which all processes were mediated simply by instinct, tradition, and obedience. Kant employs the image of the organism in order to indicate the frictionless functioning of the future society, but does not thereby deny the role of rational thought. Today, by contrast, the image of the organism characterizes a system of dependency and economic inequality that can no longer justify itself before the mature critical understanding of human beings and which thus requires metaphysical phrases in order to reconcile them to it. The organism is drawn into the matter in order to rationalize — as an eternal relationship based on blind nature — the fact that certain people decide and others execute their decision, a state of affairs made questionable by the growth of all forces. Suffering human beings are supposed to be satisfied today, as in the time of Menenius Agrippa, with the thought that their role in the whole is as innate to them as are the joints in the animal body. Obdurate natural dependency is held up as an example to the members [*Gliedern*] of society. In contradistinction to idealist sociology, which believes that it puts an end to injustice insofar as it strives to remove from people's heads the mounting consciousness of that injustice, Kantian moral theory tends toward a society in which the material arrangements are indeed linked together [*gegliedert*], but in which the development and happiness of individuals is neither subordinated to

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a sequence of stages nor surrendered up to fate. "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another," as it says in the New Testament.[29] With Kant, the organism is defined precisely by the concept of ends. Organic operation, according to him, always refers to the "causality of a concept,"[30] that is, to purpose and planning.

In the future society toward which the moral consciousness aspires, the life of the whole and of the individuals is produced not merely as a natural effect, but as the consequence of rational designs that take account of the happiness of the individuals in equal measure. In place of the blind mechanism of economic struggles which presently condition happiness and — for the greater part of humanity — unhappiness emerges the purposive application of the wealth of human and material powers of production. According to Kant, each individual "gives universal laws while also [being] subject to these laws."[31] The individual is "legislating" not merely in the juridical sense of formal democracy, but so that it itself, with its possibilities in the total social reality, might find just as much respect as all others. In Kant's sense, no specific totality [*Ganzheit*] has the status of an absolute end, only individuals: only they have reason. Kant demonstrated the idea of this dignified [*menschenwürdigen*] society, in which morality loses its basis, through his analysis of moral consciousness; this dignified society appears as its demand and consequence. Hegel made this society the foundation of his philosophy. According to him, rationality consists concretely in the unity of objective and subjective freedom; that is, in the unity of the general will and the individuals who carry out its ends.[32] Naturally Hegel considered this condition — like his liberalistic teachers of political economy [*Nationalökonomie*] — as already realized in his time. Morality as a human power distinct from interest played no major role in his system. With Hegel's definitive metaphysics of history as the driving force, it was no longer necessary. Hegel's concept of Spirit, however, contains the same ideal expressed in the bourgeois world and Kant's philosophy. The theory of its realization leads from philosophy to the critique of political economy.

29. 1 Corinthians, Ch. 12, Verse 25.

30. Cf. Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, tr. James C. Meredith, London, 1952, section 10, p. 61 (First Part) and section 64, pp. 16ff. (Second Part).

31. Kant, *Foundations, op. cit.*, p. 52.

32. Cf. e.g., *Hegel's Phuosophy of Right*, tr. T. M. Knox, London, Oxford, and New York, 1952, Sec. 258, pp. 155ff.

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With the recognition that the will and the appeal to it have their roots in the contemporary mode of production and, like other forms of life, will change with it, morality is simultaneously comprehended and made mortal. In an epoch in which the domination of the possessive instincts is the natural law of humanity, and in which by Kant's definition each individual sees the other above all as a means to his own ends, morality represents the concern for the development and happiness of life as a whole. Even the opponents of traditional morality presuppose such an indeterminate moral sentiment. In the Foreword to *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche reveals that the materialist question, "Under what conditions did man deem those value judgments good and evil?" is followed immediately by the moral one: "And what value have they themselves? Have they so far inhibited or advanced human development? Are they a sign of need, impoverishment, of deformation of life? Or, on the other hand, do they betray the fullness, the power, the will of life, its courage, its optimism, its future?" As a standard, the universal conception of humanity is as operative here as it is in Kant. Nietzsche, however, commended very perverse means for human liberation in a period when conditions for a more prosperous form of organization were already visible; his challenge to humanity in his time, that it must "set its goal above itself — not in a false world, however, but in one which would be a continuation of humanity"[33] applies to himself, for his practical suggestions all rest upon a false extrapolation. From his psychological investigation of the individuals that act under the natural law of their personal interest he concluded that the universal fulfillment of that for which they strove — namely security and happiness — would have to produce a society of philistines [Spiessbürger], the world of the "last" men. He failed to recognize that the characteristics of the present which he so detested derive precisely from the dearth of propitious conditions for society at large. With the spread of reason that he feared, with its application to all of the relations of society, those negative characteristics — which in truth rest upon the concentration of all the instincts on private advantage — must be transformed, as must ideas and indeed the drives themselves. Through his ignorance of dialectics Nietzsche foresaw the same "dearth of justice" that Kant had seen. "If it were as we would

33. "Explanatory Notes to *Thus Spake Zarathustra*," tr. Anthony M. Ludovici, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, vol. 16, ed. Oscar Levy, New York, 1964 (reissue), p. 269.

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like, all morality would transform itself into self-interest."[34] But in reality, self-interest would transform itself into morality, or rather the two would merge in a new form of human interest that would accord with the more rational condition. Nietzsche's theory of history misses the mark; he places the end [*Ziel*] in a perverse world, if not quite in another one, because he misunderstands the movement of the contemporary world due to his ignorance of economic laws. His own moral philosophy, however, contains the same elements as that which he struggles against. He fumes against himself.

Bergson claims as well that moral philosophy contains the notion of the progress of humanity. "*...de la société réelle dont nous sommes nous nous transportons par la pensée à la société idéale, vers elle montre notre hommage quand nous nous inclinons devant la dignité humaine en nous, quand nous déclarons agir par respect de nous-mêmes.*"[35] He claims that morality has two aspects: a "natural" one which arises from society's accommodation to its life-conditions — consisting in socially functional [*zweckmässigen*] reactions consolidated in customs, characteristic of primitive tribes, civilized nations, and brutish associations — and a truly human aspect, the "*élan d'amour.*" This second aspect contains within itself "*le sentiment d'un progrès*"[36] and is no longer oriented to the preservation and security of the particular association to which the individual happens to belong, but is oriented rather to humanity. The difference between the two aspects, one of which appears as the "*pression sociale*" and the other as the "*marche en avant*," is none other than Kant's distinction between natural law and respect for humanity. Even today Bergson's vision extends deep enough to hit upon the distinction between publically esteemed sentiment and forward-pointing morality. The "*tendances innées et fonda mentales de l'homme actuel*"[37] are aimed at family, interest formations, and nation, and necessarily include possible emnity between groups. Hate, but not in the least the solidarity of forward-pointing moral sentiment, belongs to this purposeful [*zweckvoller*] love. "*C'est qu'entre la nation, si grande soit-elle, et l'humanité, il y a toute la distance du fini à l'indefini, du clos a l'ouvert.*"[38] As with Nietzsche, Bergson indeed loses his sharpness of vision in the face of the question of how the ideal society prescribed

34. Kant, "*Reflexionen zur Metaphysik*," in *Handschriftlicher Nachlass*, Akademie Edition, vol. 18, p. 454.

35. *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*. Paris, 1932, p. 66.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

38. *Loc. cit.*

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by genuine morality is to be realized, which of the present forces work against it, who promulgates it, and who sides with it. Here he repeats the theory of the heroes, "*dont chacun représente, comme eût fait l'apparition d'une nouvelle espéce, un effort d'évolution créatrice.*"[39] Acording to old superstition they are to arise only in isolation and at the beginning of long periods of time. Indeed, Bergson is so certain of their rarity that he forgets to ask whether today these heroes of the "*societe idéale*" might not ultimately exist in abundance and in struggles, unless philosophers were to regard them in a manner other than that which is peculiar to the "closed soul." In this forgetting, in the indifference to the mortal struggles for that society which is anticipated in morality, in the deficient connection with the forces which are driving forward, is that bit of immorality which can presently be discovered even in genuine philosophy.

Materialism sees morality as the life expression of determinate individuals and seeks to understand it in terms of the conditions for its emergence and passing away, not for the sake of truth in itself, but in connection with determinate historical forces. Materialism understands itself as the effort to abolish existing misery. The features it discerns in the historical phenomenon of morality figure into its consideration only on the condition of a determinate practical interest. Materialism presumes no transhistorical authority behind morality. The fear which moral precepts — be they ever so spiritualized — still carry from their origin in religious authority is foreign to materialism. The consequences of all human actions work themselves out exclusively in the spatio-temporal world. As long as they have no effect on their author [*Urheber*] in this world, he has nothing to fear from them. Even the splendor in which philosophers — as well as public opinion in general — cloak "ethical" conduct, all arguments by which they recommend it, cannot withstand the test of reason. With the notion that one could investigate the "field of distinctive values"[40] in a manner similar to other inquiries, the "value research" of Scheler and Hartmann has only hit upon another method of the solution of an impossible task; the grounding of practices in mere philosophy. The very idea of a science of "the structure and order of the realm of values" necessarily entails such a promulgation of commandments. For even if this knowledge is characterized as "in a rud-

39. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
40. Hartmann, *Ethics*, vol. 1, p. 86.

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imentary stage,"[41] an "Ought[42]," which in certain cases is transformed "into the Ought-to-Do of the subject,"[43] still clings to all values the ethicist strives to discover. Despite the explanation that decision is constantly in the conscience of the subject, and despite the universality that indeed belongs to the essence of the philosophical doctrine of morality, it is claimed that there exist differences of degree in behavior conformity: "Thus, for example, brotherly love is evidently higher in value than justice, love for the remotest higher than brotherly love, and personal love (as it appears) higher than either. Likewise bravery stands higher than self-control, faith and fidelity higher than bravery, radiant virtue and personality again higher than these."[44] But such assertions, whose content moreover is only diffusely connected with moral sentiment due to the reactionary character of philosophy since Kant, have the same commandment-like character of the categorical imperative. They are the mystified expression of spiritual [*seelische*] states of affairs in which "*pression social*" and "*élan d'amour*" indeed enter into a connection which is difficult to analyze. There is no eternal realm of values. The needs and wishes, the interests and passions of human beings change in relation to the historical process. Psychology and other auxiliary sciences of history must join together to explain the accepted values and their change at any given time.

Binding moral laws do not exist. Materialism finds no transcendent authority over human beings which would distinguish between goodwill and the lust for profit, kindness and cruelty, avarice and self-sacrifice. Logic likewise remains silent and grants no pre-eminence to moral conviction. All attempts to ground morality in terms of temporal prudence rather than the hereafter — as the cited examples show, even Kant didn't resist this inclination — are based on an illusion of harmony. First of all, in most cases morality and prudence diverge. Morality does not admit of any grounding — neither by means of intuition nor of argument. But it does involve a psychic constitution. To describe the latter, to make its personal conditions and its mechanisms of transmission intelligible, is the business of psychology. Characteristic of moral sentiment is an interest which diverges from "natural law" and which has nothing to do with private acquisition and possession. At present all human impulses are

41. *Ethics*, vol. 2, p. 23.
42. *Ethics*, vol. 1, p. 247.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 259.
44. *Ethics*, vol. 2, p. 387.

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determined, whether through such law or mere convention. It follows from the definitions of the bourgeois thinkers that in this period even love falls under the category of property. "*Videmus ... quod ille, qui amat necessario conatur rem, quam amat, praesentum habere et conservare*," says Spinoza.[45] Kant describes marriage as the "joining together of two people of the opposite sex for the lifelong mutual ownership of their sexual attributes"[46] and speaks of the "equality of possessions" of the married couple not merely in terms of material goods, but also in terms of "two people who mutually own each other."[47] Modern accounts, if not completely ideological, still contain similar definitions. According to Freud, the sexual aim of the infantile instinct [*Trieb*], in which according to his teachings the essential features of the instinctual life of the adult are also to be discovered, consists in "obtaining satisfaction by means of an appropriate stimulation of the [selected] erotogenic zone ..."[48] Accordingly, the loved person appears mainly as the means to fulfill said stimulation. On this point, one is struck by the way in which Freud's theory is an elaboration of Kant's definition of marriage.

Moral sentiment is to be distinguished from this kind of love, and Kant is right to distinguish the former not only from egoism, but from any such "inclination." He indicates the psychic state of affairs by his doctrine that in morality (as opposed to that which is the rule in the bourgeois world), a person is to be not simply a means, but always at the same time an end. Moral sentiment has something to do with love, for "love, reverence, yearning for perfection, longing, all these things are inherent in an end."[49] However, this love has nothing to do with the person as economic subject or as an item in the property of the one who loves, but rather as a potential member of a happy humanity. It is not directed at the role and standing of a particular individual in civil life, but at its needs and powers, which point towards the future. Unless the aim of a future happy life for all men, which admittedly arises not on the basis of a revelation but out of the privation of the present, is included in the description of this love, it proves impossible to define. Love wishes the free develop-

45. Spinoza, *Ethica*, Pars III, Propos. XIII, Schol.

46. *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre*, Sec. 24, Akademie-Ausgabe, vol. 6, p. 277.

47. *Ibid.*, sec. 26, p. 278.

48. Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, tr. James Strachey, New York, 1962, p. 50.

49. Nietzsche, *loc. cit.*, modified translation.

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ment of the creative powers of all human beings as such. To love it appears as if all living beings have a claim to happiness, for which it would not in the least ask any justification or grounds. It stands in primordial contradiction to stringency, even though there may be psychic processes which sustain both moments in themselves. In bourgeois society, training in strict morality more often stood in service to natural law rather than under the badge of liberation from it. Not the rod of punishment, but the climax of the Ninth Symphony is the expression of moral sentiment.

This sentiment is active today in a twofold manner. First, as compassion. In Kant's period social production mediated by private acquisition was progressive; today it signifies the senseless crippling of powers and their misuse for purposes of destruction. The struggle of great economic power groups, played out on a world scale, is conducted amid the atrophy of kind human inclinations, the proclamation of overt and covert lies, and the development of an immeasurable hatred. Humanity has become so rich in the bourgeois period, and has at its disposal such great natural and human auxiliary powers, that it could exist united by worthy objectives. The need to veil this state of affairs, which is transparent in every respect, gives rise to a sphere of hypocrisy which extends not only to international relations, but which penetrates into even the most private relations; it results in a diminution of cultural endeavors (including science) and a brutalization of personal and public life, such that spiritual and material misery are compounded. At no time has the poverty of humanity stood in such crying contradiction to its potential wealth, at no time have all powers been so horribly fettered as in this generation, where children go hungry and the hands of the fathers are busy turning out bombs. It appears as if the world is being driven into a catastrophe — rather, as if it already finds itself in one — which can only be compared, within known history, to the fall of antiquity. The futility of the fate of the individual, already caused by the irrationality and barren naturalness of the production process, has risen to the most striking characteristic of contemporary existence. Whoever is fortunate could, as regards their inner worth, just as easily take the place of the most unfortunate, and vice-versa. Everyone is given up to blind chance. The course of one's existence has no relation to one's inner possibilities; one's role in the present society has for the most part no relation to that which could be achieved in a rational society. Accordingly, the behavior of the moral agent is not capable of being oriented to one's dignity; the extent to which dispositions

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and deeds are really meritorious does not come to light in the chaotic present, "the real morality of actions, their merit or guilt, even that of our own conduct, ... remains entirely hidden from us."[50] We view human beings not as subjects of their fate, but rather as objects of a blind occurence of nature, to which the response of a moral sentiment is compassion.

That Kant did not see compassion as based on a moral sentiment can be explained in terms of the historical situation. He could expect from the uninterrupted progress of free competition an increase in general happiness, for he beheld the coming of a world dominated by this principle. All the same, even in his time compassion could not be separated from morality. As long as the individual and the whole have not really become one, as long as it is not the case that the easy death of the individual freed from fear is looked upon by the individual itself as something external, because he rightly knows his essential purposes to be looked after by society at large — as long, therefore, as morality still has a reason for existence — compassion will have its place in it. Indeed, compassion may outlast it; for morality belongs to that determinate form of human relations based on the bourgeois mode of production. With the transformation of these relations through their rational arrangement, morality will, at the very least, step into the background. Human beings may then struggle in concert against their own pains and maladies — what medicine will achieve, once it is freed from its present social fetters, is not to be foreseen — although suffering and death will continue to hold sway in nature. The solidarity of human beings, however, is a part of the solidarity of life in general. The progress in the realization of the one will also strengthen the inclination toward the other. Animals need human beings [*Die Tiere bedürfen des Menschen*]. It is the accomplishment of Schopenhauer's philosophy to have wholly illuminated the unity between us and them. The greater gifts of human beings, above all reason, do not annul [*aufheben*] the communion which they feel with animals. While the traits of human beings have a certain impact, the relationship of their happiness and misery with the life of animals is manifest.

The other form in which morality today finds appropriate expression is politics. The happiness of the general public is consistently characterized as its proper aim by the great moral philosophers. To be sure, Kant had to deceive himself about the structure of future society, since he considered the form of the contemporary one to be

50. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 475 (note).

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eternal. The materialist critique of political economy was the first to show that the realization of the ideal, in terms of which the present society was established — namely the union of general and particular interest — can take place only by transforming its conditions. Today it is claimed that the bourgeois ideals of Freedom, Equality, and Justice have proven themselves to be poor ones; however, it is not the ideals of the bourgeoisie but conditions which do not correspond to them that are untenable. The battle-cries of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution are valid now more than ever. The dialectical critique of the world, which is borne along by them, consists precisely in the demonstration that they have retained their actuality rather than lost it on the basis of reality. These ideas and values are nothing but the isolated traits of the rational society, as they are anticipated in morality as a necessary goal. Politics in accord with this goal therefore must not abandon these demands, but realize them — not, however, by clinging in a utopian manner to definitions which are historically conditioned [*zeitbedingt*] — but in conformity with their meaning. The content of the ideas is not eternal, but is subject to historical change — not, as one might suppose, because "Spirit" of itself capriciously infringed upon the principle of identity — but because the human impulses which demand something better take different forms according to the historical material with which they have to work. The unity of such concepts results less from the invariability of their elements than from the historical development of the circumstances under which their realization is necessary.

In materialist theory, the main point is not to maintain concepts unchanged, but to improve the lot of humanity [*Allgemeinheit*]. In the struggle to achieve this, ideas have altered their content. Today, the freedom of the individual demands submitting their economic independence to a plan. The presupposition of the ideas of Equality and Justice hitherto was the prevailing inequality of economic and human subjects; these presuppositions disappear in a unified society, for therein these ideas lose their meaning. "Equality exists only in contrast to inequality, justice to injustice; they are therefore still burdened with the contrast to the old, previous history, hence with the old society itself."[51] Hitherto, these concepts took their determinate content from the relations of the free market, which with time were

51. Engels, Vorarbeiten zum "Anti-Dühring," Marx-Engels-Archiv, vol. 2, Frankfurt a.M., 1927, p. 408.

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supposed to function to the benefit of all. Today they have transformed themselves into the concrete image of a better society, which will be born out of the present one, if humanity does not first sink into barbarism.

The concept of Justice, which played a decisive role as a battle-cry in the struggle for a rational organization of society, is older than morality. It is as old as class society, i.e., as old as known European history itself. As a universal principle to be realized in this world, Justice, in connection with Freedom and Equality, first found recognition in bourgeois philosophy; though only today have the resources of humanity become great enough for their adequate realization as an immediate historical task. The intense struggle for their fulfillment marks our epoch of transition.

In previous history, every task of culture was possible only on the basis of a division between ruler and ruled. The suffering that is connected with the continual reproduction of the masses at a particular level and especially with every advance, which, so to speak, represents the social costs, has never been distributed equitably. The reason for this is not to be found, as the high-minded philosophers of the eighteenth century thought, in the avarice and depravity of the rulers, but in the disproportion between the powers and needs of human beings. Right up till the present, the general level of development of the whole of society (including the upper class) conditioned, in view of the available tools, the subordination of the masses at work and thus in life generally. Their coarseness corresponded to the inability of the rulers to raise them to a higher stage of development, and both moments were constantly reproduced along with the harshness of social life, which changes only slowly. Historical humanity, in danger of sinking into chaos, had no choice but to abandon the relation of domination. The emergence and dissemination of cultural values cannot be separated from this division. Leaving aside the material goods which result from a production process based on the division of labor, the products of art and science, the refined forms of intercourse among men, their sense of an intellectual life, all point to their origin in a society which distributes burdens and pleasures unequally.

It has often been asserted that class division, which has left its imprint on all previous history, is a continuation of the inequality in nature. The genera of animals may be divided up into predators and prey, such that some genera are both at the same time, whereas others are principally only one of the two. Even within genera there are

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spatially separated groups, which appear to be in part blessed by fortune, in part pursued by a series of inconceivable blows of fate. In turn, the pain and death of the individuals within the groups and genera are unequally distributed, and depend on circumstances which lack any meaningful connection to the life of the those so affected. The inequality which is constantly determined by the life-process of society is related to that inequality which pertains to the whole of nature. Both of these permeate the life of humanity, in that the natural diversity of external form and abilities, not to mention diseases and further circumstances of death, further complicate social inequality. Of course, the degree to which these natural differences are operative in society depends on historical development; they have different consequences at the various levels of different social structures: the appearance of the same disease can mean quite *different things for members of different social circles*. Attention, pedagogical artifice, and a range of gratifications afford the poorly gifted wealthy child the opportunity to develop the aptitudes which still remain, whereas the slow child of poor people struggling for existence will go to ruin mentally as well as physically: this child's shortcomings will be intensified throughout its life, its hopeful first steps will come to nothing.

In this history of humanity, in which inequality constitutes such a fundamental trait, a certain human reaction repeatedly became apparent, whether as its other side or as its effect. The abolition of inequality has been demanded at different times and in different places by not only the dominated classes, but renegades from the ruling classes who pronounced inequality evil. The equality which was to be brought about (and which, in the materialist view, developed with the exchange relationship) has been understood in various ways. From the basic demand that everyone should receive an equal share of the consumer goods produced by society (e.g., in early Christendom) to the proposition that to each should be allotted that share which corresponds to their labor (e.g., Proudhon), to the thought that the most sensitive should be the least burdened (Nietzsche), there is an exceedingly wide range of ideas about the correct state of affairs. All of them make reference to the point that happiness, insofar as it is possible for each person in comparison with others on the basis of their lot in society, is not to be determined by fortuitous, capricious factors which are external to the individual — in other words: that the degree of inequality of the life-conditions of individuals at least be no greater than that dictated by the maintenance of

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the total social supply of goods at the given level. That is the universal content of the concept of Justice; according to this concept, the social inequality prevailing at any given time requires a rational foundation. It ceases to be considered as Good, and becomes something that should be overcome.

It is an achievement of recent times to have made this principle universal. Yet in this same period there has certainly been no lack of defenders of inequality and eulogists for the blindness in nature and society. But if philosophers representative of past epochs, such as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, had extolled the differences in people's fate as an eternal value, then the Enlightenment (in connection with old humanistic doctrines, to be sure) described inequality as an evil to be abolished. In the French Revolution, Equality was raised to a principle of the constitution. Recognition of this principle was not mere inspiration or, in Bergson's terms, an incursion of open morality into the sphere of closed morality. Rather its recognition belonged in that epoch to the process whereby the entire society conformed to the changing life-conditions. The latter puts this recognition into effect on the strength of the dynamic residing in it, as with every living being, both continuously as well as by leaps and bounds. The idea of Equality "*résulte logiquement des transformations réelle de nos sociétés.*"[52] The idea of Equality necessarily brings that of Freedom to the fore. If indeed no individual is initially less worthy than another of developing and finding satisfaction in reality, it follows that the utilization of coercion by one group against the other must be acknowledged as evil. The concept of Justice is as inseparable from that of Freedom as it is from that of Equality.

From the beginning, the proclamation of Equality as a constitutional principle was not only an advance for thought, but a danger as well. As the sublation of determinate inequalities (which were no longer necessary, which were indeed hindrances in the context of the expanded powers of human beings) in fact came to pass in the new constellation of legal relations, this step was proclaimed withal as the realization of Equality in general. It became unclear whether the social equality of human beings was still a demand to be met or a description of reality. The French Revolution had not only helped the universal concept of Justice to gain theoretical recognition, but had to a great extent realized it at that time as well. This concept came to dominate the ideas of the nineteenth century and turned into the de-

52. Bouglé, *Les idées égalitaires*, Paris, 1925, p. 248.

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cisive feature of all thought, indeed even into the feeling of the European and American world. But the institutions which at the time aptly embodied the principle have grown old, as has the overall constitution of bourgeois society. At the time, equality before the law had signified a step forward in the direction of Justice, inequality of property notwithstanding; today it has become inadequate because of this economic inequality. Freedom of public expression was a weapon in the struggle for better conditions; today it acts primarily to the advantage of conditions which have become obsolete. Sanctity of property was a protection of bourgeois labor against the clutches of the authorities; today it brings in its wake monopolization, the expropriation of additional bourgeois strata and the tying up of social resources.

The alliance struck between the ruling power and the ideas of the bourgeoisie since the victory of the French Revolution confounds thought for this reason: these propelling ideas are alienated from and set against their logical proponents, the progressive forces of society. But it is precisely in the present, as humanity confronts the danger of ruin, that humanity is charged with their realization. The abolition of economic inequality, which would soon have to lead to a far-reaching abolition of the distinction between the rulers and ruled, signifies for the first time today not an abandonment of cultural values, but on the contrary their redemption. While the unequal distribution of power was among the prerequisites of culture in earlier epochs, today it has become a threat to the same. Forces which benefit from wretched social relations presently make use of those ideas to avert the possible change needed by humanity. They snatch these ideas from those who have a genuine interest in their realization. The present confusion in the ideological [*weltanschaulichem*] domain is a consequence of this. The provisions of justice, which today find expression in the institutions of a merely formal democracy and in the ideas of those raised in its spirit, have lost any clear connection to their origin. Otherwise, they would now be levelled at the ruling powers which fetter the development of humanity, just as they were during the time when the latter understood the bourgeoisie itself in a productive sense — except that today the change would signify a much more decisive step. However, although the powerful themselves have for centuries proclaimed the principles of a good order to be holy, they are willing to twist them around or betray them the instant that their meaningful application no longer serves their interest, but runs against it. Indeed, they are

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ready to throw overboard and pull from the curriculum all the ideals which the fathers of the bourgeois revolution championed, worked for, and fought for, as soon as people are developed and desperate enough to no longer apply them mechanically to the preservation of institutions, but to apply them dialectically to the realization of a better order. In many places, the requirements of internal and external control entail that all progressive elements of bourgeois morality be stifled or deliberately eliminated. There is a steady increase in the number of countries where those values that aim at the happiness of individuals have fallen into disrepute; it appears that the period in which the bourgeois world produced morality was too short to be maintained at the level of generality in flesh and blood. It is not only secular morality which rests on such shaky ground; the same can be said of whatever elements of kindness and charity made their way into the soul as a result of Christianity (the civilizing influence which preceded secular morality), such that in a few decades even these forces could atrophy. The moral sentiment in governments, peoples, and spokesmen of the civilized [*gebildeten*] world is so weak that, although it is indeed expressed at gatherings on the occasions of earthquakes and mine disasters, it is nevertheless easily silenced and forgotten in the face of the monstrous injustice which takes place for the sake of pure property interests, i.e., in the enforcement of the "natural law" and amidst the mockery of all bourgeois values.

The appeal to morality is more powerless than ever, but it is not even needed. In contrast to the idealistic belief in the cry of conscience as a decisive force in history, this hope is foreign to materialist thinking. Yet because materialism itself belongs to the efforts to attain a better society, it well knows where the elements of morality that are pushing forward are active today. They are produced time and again, under the immense pressure which weighs heavily upon a large segment of society, in the will to create rational relations which correspond to the present state of development. The part of humanity which necessarily counts on this change, due to its situation, already contains (and attracts ever more) forces for whom realizing a better society is a matter of great importance. It is also psychologically prepared for it, since its role in the production process forces it to rely less on the unlikely increase of property than on the employment of its labor power. These conditions facilitate the generation of personalities in which the acquisitive instincts are not of prime importance. If the inheritance of morality thus passes on to new classes, there are nevertheless many proletarians who exhibit

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those bourgeois traits under the domination of the natural law.[53] The works of later bourgeois writers such as Zola, Maupassant, Ibsen, and Tolstoy constitute testimonials to moral goodness. But in any case, the common efforts of that part of humanity guided by knowledge contain so much genuine solidarity with respect to their liberation, and that of all of humanity, so little concern about their private existence, so few thoughts of possessions and property, that they already seem to manifest the sensibility [*Lebensgefühl*] of a future humanity. In existing society, the putative consciousness of equality generally overlooks the actual inequality in human beings, and thus embraces untruth, whereas the forces pressing for change place actual inequality in the forefront. The authentic concept of Equality contains knowledge of its negative: contemporary human beings differ not only in terms of economic fortunes, but also in terms of their intellectual and moral qualities. A Bavarian farmer differs radically from a factory worker in Berlin. But the certainty that the differences are based on transient conditions — and above all that inequalities of power and happiness, as they have become entrenched today through the structure of society, no longer correspond to the developed forces of production — engenders a respect for the inner possibilities of the individual and for that "which can be made out of him" (Kant), a feeling of independence and goodwill, which politics must positively connect with if it is concerned to build a free society.

There is no obligation to this politics, any more than there is an obligation to compassion. Obligations refer back to commands and contracts, which do not exist in this case. Nonetheless, materialism recognizes in compassion, as well as in progressive politics, productive forces historically related to bourgeois morality. According to materialism, however, not just the explicit forms of command, but the ideas of duty and metaphysical obligation [*Schuld*], and above all the maligning of desire and pleasure constrain the present social dynamic. Materialist theory certainly does not afford to the political actor the solace that he will necessarily achieve his objective; it is not a metaphysics of history, but rather a changing image of the world, evolving in relation to the practical efforts towards its improvement. The knowledge of tendencies contained in this image offers no clear prognosis of historical development. Even if those who maintain that the theory could be misleading "only" in regard to the pace of devel-

53. "*Die psychoanalytische Charakterologie und ihre Bedeutung für die Sozialpsychologie*" [The Psychoanalytic Theory of the Personality and its Significance for Social Psychology], *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, 1932, p. 268ff., esp. p. 274.

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opment and not its direction, were correct (a frightful "only," since it concerns the agonies of generations), merely formal time could, after all, turn around and affect the quality of the content, i.e., humanity could be thrown back to earlier stages of development simply because the struggle lasted too long. But even the sheer certainty that such a new order would come to pass would not alone provide even the slightest of grounds on which to affirm or precipitate this new order. That something in the world gains power is no reason to revere it. The ancient myth of the rulers, that that which has power must also be good, passed into occidental philosophy by way of Aristotle's doctrine of the unity of reality and perfection. Protestantism reaffirmed this myth in its belief in God as the lord of history and the regulator of the world. It dominates the whole of life in present-day Europe and America. The blind worship of success determines men even in the most private expressions of life. For the materialist, the mere presence of a historical force, or its prospects, does not constitute its recommendation. The materialist asks how this historical force, at a given moment, relates to materialist values and acts according to the concrete situation. In the prevailing social conditions, such action is burdened by the unhappy situation that compassion and politics, the two forms in which moral sentiment finds expression today can only rarely be brought into rational relationship. Regard for those close at hand and those far away, support for the individual and for humanity are contradictory in most cases. Even the best harden some place in their hearts.

The insight that morality cannot be proven, that not a single value admits of a purely theoretical grounding, separates materialism from the idealist currents of philosophy. But both the derivation and the concrete application of the principle within the sphere of knowledge [*Wissenschaft*] are completely different. In idealist philosophy this principle is necessarily connected with the doctrine of the absolutely free subject. Just as the subject (at least according to later exponents) supposedly produces knowledge of itself, so too is the positing of value thought to be subjective. Without any foundation at all, it issues from autonomous Spirit, from "the intellectus." Nikolaus Cusanus already teaches: "But for the power of judgement and of comparison there ceases to be any evaluation, and with it value must fall as well. Herefrom springs the wonder of the mind since without it everything created would have been without value."[54] Even though, according

54. De ludo globi II, 236f., cited in Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance*, Berlin, 1927, p. 46.

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to Cusanus, the autonomous subject does not of itself produce the *essence* of value, it nonetheless freely decides how much of that essence is accorded to each object. In this creative activity, it is supposed to be similar to God, even, as it were, another God itself. Since Cusanus, this doctrine has been definitive in science and philosophy. Thus, the differences in the value of things are by no means material; the object in itself is indifferent to value. Science can indeed describe the human acts which posit value, but cannot itself decide among them. In modern methodology this principle is formulated as the demand for value-neutrality [*Wertfreiheit*]. Max Weber's view is characteristic of the main tendencies of idealistic philosophy (with the exception of theories of objective value), which display mostly romantic, or in any case anti-democratic tendencies. It is his view "that we are *cultural* beings, endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude towards the world and to lend it signficance...Undoubtedly, all evaluative ideas are 'subjective.'"[55] As a result of this doctrine, idealist philosophy and science rule out any value judgement. Indeed, in recent decades it has increasingly been made a duty of the human or cultural sciences not to develop a connection with larger social objectives, but establish and classify "theory-free" facts. The application of earlier bourgeois objectives — above all the greatest happiness of all — to those areas of inquiry [*Wissenschaften*] would necessarily lead to increasing conflicts. In the original works of the bourgeoisie these motives are absolutely decisive. Even the originators of positivism defended themselves against the neutral degeneration of knowledge [*Wissenschaft*], in contrast to many of their later disciples. "The 'dispersive speciality' of the present race of scientific men," writes John Stuart Mill in his work on Auguste Comte, "who, unlike their predecessors, have a positive aversion to enlarged views, and seldom either know or care for any of the interests of mankind beyond the narrow limits of their pursuit, is dwelt on by M. Comte as one of the great and growing evils of the time, and the one which most retards moral and intellectual regeneration. To contend against it is one of the main purposes towards which he thinks the forces of society should be directed."[56] Such voices are rare among today's progressive scholars. They must be satisfied with defending their work against the increasing predomi-

55. Max Weber, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy," ed. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch, New York, 1949, pp. 81, 83.

56. John Stuart Mill, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, Boston, 1866, p. 88.

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nance of those who, without respect for rigor or integrity, would like knowledge to return to its subjugation under questionable goals, and would reduce it to the hand-maiden of whatever power happens to hold sway. In seeking to protect knowledge and the interest in truth from the present invading barbarism, those scholars render a service to civilization similar to where, through education, genuine bourgeois values still have respect in the public mind. [57]

Materialism recognizes the unconditional respect for truth as a necessary if not sufficient condition of science. It knows that interests stemming from social and personal circumstances also condition research, whether the researcher [*der Urheber der Wissenschaft*] at any given time knows it or not. On both a small and a large scale, historical factors are operative not only in the choice of objects, but in the direction of attention and abstraction as well. In each case, the result has its origin in a determinate interrelation between investigators and objects. But in contrast to idealist philosophy, materialism does not trace the interests and objectives that are operative on the part of the subject back to the independent creative activity of this subject, to free will. On the contrary, they are themselves seen as a result of a development in which both subjective and objective moments have a part. Even exchange value in the economy is not based on free valuation, but rather ensues from the life-process of society, in which use-values are determining factors. The undialectical concept of the free subject is foreign to materialism. Materialism is also well aware of itself as conditioned. Apart from personal nuances, this latter is to be sought in connection with those forces devoted to the realization of the aims stated above. Because materialist science never takes its eyes from these aims, it does not assume the character of false impartiality, but is consciously biased [*akzentuiert*]. It is concerned not so much with originality as with the extension of the theoretical knowledge already attained on this course.

Materialism breaks from present-day positivism in its acknowledgment of the decisive significance of theory, as contrasted with the mere compiling of facts. Certainly no such division pertains between materialiam and concrete research, which often arrive at the same findings [*Erkenntnisse*]. Some positivists have grasped the relation of morality and praxis to theory through an intimate acquaintance with social problems. "*Loin que la pratique se déduise de la théorie, c'est la théorie*

57. Cf., e.g., the discussion led by Ed. Claparède at the meeting of the Societé francaise de Philosophie on March 12, 1932 (vid. the Bulletin of this society, July/September 1932, published by Armand Colin in Paris).

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qui, jusqu'à présent, est une sorte de projection abstraite do la morale pratiquée dans une société donnée, à une époque donnée."[58] Theory is a cohesive body of insights [*Zusammenhang von Erkenntnissen*] stemming from a determinate praxis and out of determinate objectives. The world reveals a consistent image to whomever looks at it from a consistent point of view — an image which changes, to be sure, with the historicity of acting and knowing individuals. Praxis already organizes the material of individual knowing. The demand to establish theory-free facts is false, it this is to mean that subjective factors are not already operative in the given objective facts. Understood productively, it can only mean that the description is veracious [*wahrhaftig*]. The whole cognitive structure from which every description gets its meaning, and which description should serve in return, even theory itself ranks among the strivings of the human beings that create it. These may arise from private whims, from reactionary interests, or from the needs of a developing humanity.

58. Lévy-Bruhl, *La morale et la science des moeurs*, ninth impression, Paris, 1927, p. 98.

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Notes and Commentary

Interrupting the Conversation: Notes on Rorty

Rebecca Comay

> ... We do not know what 'success' would mean except simply 'continuance'..." (Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*)
>
> *
>
> ... Hence the contrast between dialectics and pragmatism, like every distinction in philosophy, is reduced to a nuance, namely, to the conception of that "next step." The pragmatist, however, defines it as adjustment, is reduced to a nuance, namely, to the conception of that "next step." The pragmatist, however, defines it as adjustment, and this perpetuates the domination of what is always the same. Were dialectics to sanction this, it would renounce itself in renouncing the idea of potentiality. But how is potentiality to be conceived if it is not to be abstract and arbitrary, like the utopias dialectical philosophers proscribed? Conversely, how can the next step assume direction and aim without the subject knowing more than what is already given? If one chose to reformulate Kant's question, one could ask today, *how is anything new possible at all?*... Pragmatism is narrow and limited because it hypostasizes th(e) situation as eternal... (Adorno, *Prisms*).

I

... *Liberalism without tears*: "There seems no particular reason why, after dumping Marx, we have to keep repeating all the nasty things about bourgeois liberalism he taught us to say . . .' (CP 207)[1] Rorty's mission is clear. It is to "*continue* the conversation of the West" (PMS 394) while resisting the teleological temptation; to maintain our "liberal habits" (SO 11) in the lapse

1. The following abbreviations to works of Rorty will apply throughout this essay. CP: *Consequences of Pragmatism: Essays 1972-1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); CL: "The Contingency of Language," *London Reivew of Books* 8.7 (April 17, 1986), 3-6; CS: "The Contingency of Selfhood," *London Review of Books* 8.8 (May 8, 1986), 11-15; DC: "Deconstruction and Circumvention" in *Critical Inquiry* (Sept. 1984), 1-23; HM: "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity" in R. Bernstein, ed. *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985), pp. 161-176; PBL: "Post-

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of any philosophical convictions; to nurture the "hopes of the North Atlantic bourgeoisie" (PBL 585) — civil society, democracy, technological progress, and so on — in the absence of the foundations which have sustained them up to now. "Postmodernist bourgeois liberalism" (PBL 585) is the attempt to hang onto the "ideals of the Enlightenment" (PMN 333) while dispensing with Enlightenment Reason: it is the modernist cheerfulness minus the modernist faith.

And so Rorty reproduces the terms of the bourgeois liberal tradition — cut loose from its rationalist justifications (the grounding in natural law, the appeal to the light of reason, the evocation of *homo humanus*); shorn of its universalist pretensions; cut off from its utopian "truth." Existing bourgeois liberalism is to be promoted, without argument, as the "best example of [. . .] solidarity we have yet achieved." (CP 207) "We should be more willing than we are," avers Rorty, "to celebrate bourgeois capitalist society as the best polity actualized so far, while regretting that it is irrelevant to most of the problems of most of the population of this planet." (CP 210 n. 16)

Who is this "we"? It is a "we" which has shrugged off the authority of Hegel's magisterial *für uns*; which no longer parades as the incarnation of Spirit or the "total horizon of humanity;" which no longer appeals to the dialectic of recognition (the encounter of natural and philosophical consciousness, i.e. the "scene of instruction" of a *Phenomenology of Spirit*); which no longer insists on "hearing itself speak." It is a "we" which has been stripped free of all the old essentialisms (subjectivity, objectivity, eschatology, freedom). It no longer appeals, for its legitimacy, to the light of nature (or Reason, or necessity, or *telos*). It "asserts" itself without "grounding" itself (Blumenberg): it simply announces itself and makes no further claims.

It is a "we" which is defiantly parochial and names itself without flinching. Rorty's "we" contracts or expands (usually contracts) to fit any available space — "we liberal intellectuals" (HM 173); "we liberal democrats" (PDP 31); "we Western liberal intellectuals" (SO 23); "we rich North American bourgeois" (PBL 588); "us . . . educated, leisured policy-makers of the West" (CP 203); "us relatively leisured intellectuals, inhabiting a stable and prosperous part of the world" (PMN 359); "we . . . the people who have read and pondered Plato, Newton, Kant, Marx, Darwin, Freud, Dewey, etc." (CP 173); "we . . . liberal Rawlsian searchers for consensus" (SO 12); "us American liberals" (SH 272); constricting, eventually, to "we philosophy professors" (CP 189) or, still further, "we Anglo-Saxon philosophers" (SR 5), "we pragmatists" (SO 12); or,

modernist Bourgeois Liberalism," *Journal of Philosophy* 80 (Oct. 1983), 583-9; PDP: "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," unpublished ms., 1986; PNM: *Philosophy and the Nature of Mirror* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); SH: "Pragmatism without Method" in Paul Kurtz, ed. *Sidney Hook: Philosopher of Democracy and Humanism* (1983), pp. 259-273; SO: "Solidarity or Objectivity?" in J. Rajchman and C. West, eds. *Post-Analytic Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 3-19; SR: "Signposts Along the Way that Reason Went," *London Review of Books* 6.3 (Feb., 1984), 5-6; SS: "Science as Solidarity," unpublished ms., 1986.

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yet again, "we Wittgensteinian nominalists" (DC 18) "we fuzzies" (SS 4), and so on . . . .

" 'There is only the dialogue,' only *us*." (SO 15) "We": a "community," a "solidarity," which has been cut loose from its metaphysical moorings, from the old transcendental "backups" (HM 173) — from Kant to Hegel to Habermas in our day: God, Reason, Nature, Freedom — cut loose from the "theories" that has until recently propped it up. "We" does not proselytize; "we" is as we are. To claim more than this is sanctimoniousness; to claim less, bad manners. "It would be better," insists Rorty (demolishing Habermas' swooping claims to metanarrative legitimation as being just more universalist conceit) "to be frankly ethnocentric" (HM 165). All the failures of nerve he detects in Habermas ("ideal speech situation"), Peirce ("ideal end of inquiry") (SO 5), or even in Putnam ("ideal terminus") (SO 10) simply betray a lingering idealism. It is the divine "we" of the *sensus communis* — puffing up the partnership, pretending to be all. To posit a *telos* or end to the conversation — indeed to compare the present to the possible, so as to create a new future — is to flee time and history; it is to "scratch where it does not itch" (HM 164); it is to reinstate all the old gods.

Philosophy, stripped of legislative function, is invited simply to "continue the conversation" (PMN 394). "We do not know what 'success' would mean," insists Rorty, "except simply 'continuance'." (CP 172).

II

"Progress," shorn of its providential trappings, becomes the cheerful accumulation of the "more and more." History, finally freed from Reason's tyranny, becomes the incremental passage through the "new." Philosophy turns to "conversation," literally, turning over and over in its groove. It becomes a question of "doing more interesting things and being more interesting people" (SO 10); "we read more, talk more, write more" (PMN 375); we search for "new, better, more interesting, more fruitful ways of speaking" (PMN 360). "Evanescent moments in a continuing conversation" (PMN 378) — like bubbles rising to the cocktail's surface — we "keep the conversation going." (PMN 378)

The conversation, "floating, ungrounded" (CP 174), has the restlessness of a Faustian quest. "New forms of life constantly killing off old forms," remarks Rorty, "— not to accomplish a higher purpose, but blindly." (CL 6) Here the perpetually "new" slides over easily into the already-out-of-date; history becomes a flickering succession of instants, without sequence, without end: such is "our" modesty, our frenzy. It is the logic of sheer obsolescence, the eternal repetition of the same. "Since he has no extra-historical Archimedean point" the postmodernist is bound, after all, "to become outdated. Nobody is so passé as the intellectual czar of the previous generation." (CP xl)

"Conversation" is the eighteenth century dream of gentlemanly social intercourse adapted to the rhythms of consumer society. It is Gadamer's nostalgic evocation of classical erudition, Oakeshott's urbane "pursuit of intimations," the neo-classical decorum celebrated by a Pater or an Eliot. It is Old

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World "high culture" done over American-style, and with the ironic awareness that "The Tradition" is in any case no longer ours to be had. What Rorty calls "free and leisured conversation" (PMN 389) has the frenetic pace of Adorno's "culture industry." Here is Rorty's own mock-facetious description of the "post-modern bourgeois" hero, the "all-purpose intellectual," "ready to offer a view on pretty well anything" (CP xxxix), scrambling to pick up the pieces of a crumbling archive. "He passes rapidly from Hemingway to Proust to Hitler to Marx to Foucault to Mary Douglas to the present situation in Southeast Asia to Gandhi to Sophocles. He is a name-dropper, who uses names such as these to refer to sets of descriptions, symbol-systems, ways of seeing. His speciality is seeing similarities and differences between great big pictures, between attempts to see how things hang together." (CP xl)

Where global "metanarratives" are outlawed, or impossible, the conversation adapts to the episodic rhythms of a commercial culture. The conversation is voracious, omnivorous; it consumes what it encounters and retains the traces of each encounter. We are close here, indeed, to the museal "historical sense" lampooned by Nietzsche in the *Untimely Meditations*: a greed so pressing it will cram anything down — *je mehr desto besser* — books, foreign language, "the dust of bibliographic *Quisquilien*."[2] It is the hungry *Neugier*, the "lust for the new" exposed by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. It is the eclectic promiscuity of Benjamin's historicist, fingering the rosary of an already dead tradition. It is the encyclopaedic enthusiasm of the Autodidact in *Nausea* (plowing assiduously, methodically, through the local library). It is the bizarre and monstrous humanism of Panurge; it is the versatility of Plato's sophist. — I'm dropping these names, in good "conversational" shorthand, only to gesture towards the curious cultural dislocation which is at work here. Rorty's vaguely Dadaist blueprint marks the final crisis of historical thought. Here a debilitated humanism breathes its last gasp. Cut off from its historical moorings, devoid of utopian direction, philosophy drifts distractedly through the ruins of the Western archive. It is Gadamer's cultural vision without the Gadamerian faith in History; a *Bildungsroman* without closure, a conglomeration without end.

III

The conversation continues: without interruption or impetus. Sanguine, indifferent to social criticism, it knows itself to be irrelevant and becomes an idle plaything for the sophisticates.

Rorty spares no sarcasm in puncturing the Philosophers' delusions of grandeur: they mistake "academic politics" for "real politics" (CP 229) and take themselves altogether too seriously. He makes short work of Derrida's "tone of urgency" (DC 19); the "anarchistic claptrap"[3] of a Foucault; Lyotard's "silly

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke*, hrsg. Karl Schlechta (München: Hanser, 1965) Bd. I pp. 293, 228; trans. R.J.Hollingdale, *Untimely Mediations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 132-75.

3. Comments on Hacking's "Michel Foucault's Immature Science," APA (w) (Apr. 1979) 9f.

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avant-gardism" (HM 169); or the absurd self-importance he detects in Heidegger. To assume a tangible political function for philosophy is to commit the old metaphysical hubris: the philosopher masquerades as legislator and forgets where he belongs.

"Who but a philosopher professor, after all, would think that the drama of twentieth century Europe had some essential relation to the *Vollendung der Metaphysik*?" (CP 47) Or again: "Derrida talks as if this neat textbook dilemma were a real one, as if there were a terrible oppressive force called . . . 'the history of metaphysics' which is making life impossible not only for playful punsters like himself but for society as a whole." (DC 14)

Rorty depoliticizes philosophy to the same degree, and by the same logic, as he aestheticizes politics. Indeed he marginalizes and aggrandizes philosophy in one and the same blow: refusing, on the one hand, to grant it any "real" efficacy and force; on the other hand, representing social relations in such idealized terms that they become indistinguishable, in the end, from a strictly cultural exchange. Thus while Rorty divests philosophy of all social relevance, he simultaneously privileges it as the model of social intercourse at large. His *exclusion* of philosohy from the political sphere is paralleled precisely by his *idealization* of politics, his onesided emphasis on discursive practices (to the neglect of, e.g., work and power), his overvaluation of the cultural sphere.

The bravura with which he insists on philosophy's political marginality — "wildly irrelevant" to the rest of society (HM 174), an "unimportant excursus" (HM 175), a "mere distraction from the history of concrete social engineering which have made the contemporary North Atlantic culture what it is now, with all its glories and all its dangers" (HM 173) — this cynical bravura is matched, at every stop of the way, by an unquestioning attachment to the habits and values of his own professional class. The (professional) self-importance Rorty attibutes — correctly, of course — to Heidegger and company is matched only by the (professional) *comfort* Rorty takes in his self-appointed calling. "Who but a philosophy professor," demands Rorty, "would take all this stuff so seriously?" "Who but a philosophy professor," we might in turn ask of Rorty, "would represent society on the model of a conversational encounter?"

For Rorty's *societas* in fact looks, on closer examination, like another *universitas*; or rather, a "better" liberal arts college with a commitment to interdisciplinary studies, nourished by a "spirit of cooperation" (PDP 43), collegial affability, a respect for the classics combined with a healthy awareness of current events, and so on. "Solidarity," indeed, in Rorty's recent writings, is exemplified by the team spirit of a modern research institution (SS 8), while his "free and open encounter" (CP 173) has the cozy respectability of sherry hour. Rorty's swipes at "boring professional philosophy," in this context, have the distinct ring of the disaffected "culture critic" — appalled by the pinheadedness of his colleagues, insulted by the vulgarities of the market, avidly in pursuit of intimations, dreaming of better days. Secure in his priv-

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ilege, aristocratic in his protests, Rorty only flatters philosophy as he chastises it, and sets out to elevate its "tone."

IV

The conversation, continuing, leaves everything in its place. Rorty leaves philosophy dangling, as usual, between pathetic acquiescence and absurd transcendence. Observe the gentle blackmail. Either we celebrate our own society as the best of all conceivable worlds or we reveal our own essentialist stripes. Either we admit that we are "just the historical moment we are" (SO 13) or we go chasing after the old "metaphysical comforts" (CP 166) — grounds, essences, destinies, Human Natures — "evading [our] contingency" (CP 166), "clinging" to eternity (CP 165), fantasizing about the "ultimate community" (SO 5), dreaming the "old Platonic dream" (SH 273).

To offer a *critique*, to contest or refuse the present, is, for Rorty, to assume a higher standpoint and hence to play at being God (cf. SO 13). Behind the vanguardist zeal lurks the Philosopher's foolish pride. Underlying the "Socratic alienation" is the old "Platonic hope" (SO 5). Underlying the Habermasian suspicion is the "too pessimistic and too exclusively German" (HM 169) sourness of the disaffected intellectual — exaggerating the difficulties, forcing his own problems on everybody else, taking himself oh, so seriously, spoiling a good time. Counterfactual thinking becomes indeed only the latest form of "epistemology"; it is the old search for privileged touchstones (cf. PMN 210), "universal standpoints" (SO 13) or Archimedean footholds; it is the "neurotic Cartesian quest for certainty" (CP 161), raised to an eschatological pitch.

"Hope" — cured of its histrionic fervor — becomes, in Rorty, the happy desire that we keep on going just the way we are. "We" — shorn of our universalist conceits — turn to patching up our tattered friendships, "deepen[ing our] sense of community" (CP 203), "heightening" our "identification with our community" (CP 166), trading in the old "metaphysical comforts" (CP 166) for the more tangible ones at hand. "Community" — freed from global presumptions — becomes simply the place we are. "History" — freed from the constraining *arché* and *telos* — becomes the endless continuation of the same. "Lonely provincialism" (SO 12), faced "frankly" (HM 165), becomes the cozy familiarity of the group. And philosophy, stripped of critical arrogance, becomes the cheerful affirmation of the "now." It is a collusive historicism pitted against a delusive vanguardism: the critical critic versus the well-adjusted citizen.

V

What is most striking in all this is the way in which a concrete historical undertaking has been neutralized and deflected *in the name of history itself.*

Precisely where Rorty's historicism could have been put (in pragmatic terms) to "good use" — by exploding the "myth of the given"; by insisting that our present conceptual modes are relative to a specific social or institutional context ("made" rather than "found," in Rorty's terms); by refusing to legitimate or embalm any given cultural code through an appeal to eternal or

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transcultural standards; by mocking the conceit of philosophy (as purveyor of essences) and thus challenging not only its intellectual hegemony but its institutional self-enclosure — precisely where Rorty's hermeneutic pragmatism, if pursued rigorously, could and should have led philosophy in the direction of a general social and political critical project, Rorty shrinks back from the potentially subversive or utopian implications of his own undertaking and retreats to safer ground.

Indeed, under the very banner of historicism, history as such is obliterated. Rorty inscribes thought and language within history, only to dissolve history itself into a timeless realm of shadows: stripped of material content, blind to its own process of formation, devoid of utopian tension or promise.

Society, in Rorty, takes the place where Nature once stood. Contemporary social practice — the final context and last court of appeal — congeals into a preformed and reified essence, frozen in its contingency, immune from philosophical criticism, invulnerable to real change. The "community," unproblematized, becomes the ultimate given: opaque, inert, in no need of justification, and lacking the means to interrogate itself. The "conversation" has the homeostatic regularity of a smoothly functioning machine — without beginning, without end, without contradiction, without crisis: effortlessly reproducing itself, commanding our assent.

"History" functions here, indeed, as something "found" and not "made." "We" (bourgeois liberal intellectual etc. Americans that we are) find ourselves thrown into a world already constituted — *Geworfenheit* cut off from *Entwurf*, contingency hypostatized as fact — rowing gently down the stream in Neurath's sinking boat, mending the rotting planks with the tools the system offers, deriding the revolutionary's call to jump ship as one more piece of transcendentalist conceit (cf. SO 12).

And Philosophy functions better than ever now as the Mirror of (social) Nature, holding up its tinted glass to the order of the day. The "correspondence" is at first glance all the tighter once you free thought from critical reflection; you simply don't *need* to talk about Glassy Essences when the fit is as exact as it appears to be here. "Conversation," freed of "wholesale constraints" (CP 165), has the *laissez-faire* relaxation of a free-market economy (SH 262). Social existence, immunized from its material conditions and invulnerable to ideological debate, hums as quietly as a well-heeled philosophy seminar.

Had Rorty actually worried more about getting the picture to "fit," he would have, of course, had to deal with the discrepancies and contradictions agonizing society as a whole, rendering the whole idea of "conversation" pretty academic, in more than one sense, and bordering on the absurd. He would have had to face the fact, for example, that the Jeffersonian "tolerance" he cherishes in his Western liberal democracies may be more "repressive" (Marcuse) than real; that exhortations to "civility" (CP 202) (and against what he calls "dogmatism, defensiveness, and righteous indignation" [SS 3]), may, *when applied abstractly*, serve above all to legitimate the exclusion of marginal or dissident voices from the conversation; that the appearance of open pluralist

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debate may, as often as not, more often than not, mask the monolithic interests of the dominant power group; that the virtues of civic tolerance have in any case been rendered pretty theoretical by the ideological distortion endemic to late capitalism; and, finally, that the strictly cultural satisfactions he promotes — and here Rorty's "we" contracts easily and spontaneously from "we Europeans" to "we relatively leisured intellectuals" (PMN 359) to "we philosophy professors" (CP 189) to "we fuzzies" (SS 4), and so on — that these esoteric aesthetic pleasures, when abstracted and isolated from their material context, not only remain necessarily restricted and elitist, but may indeed preempt and deflect and drive to fulfil more profane, noncultural satisfactions.

He would have had to acknowledge in short, that the "democracy" is a sham one, and that this "let's be friends" business is disingenuous at the best of times.

What is naive is not the conversational ideal per se, nor yet the "hope" that it might be accomplished: this should go without saying. And what is naive is not necessarily the (modernist) attachment to Enlightenment values, nor yet the (postmodernist) insistence that these values be freed from their theological props: this too, by now, should be granted. What is naive — but it is more than naive, since it actively colludes in accommodating the present — is the suggestion that the conversation is already realized, or within reach, or that it could be realized easily, or realized in the abstract, or realized only by the elect few. What is naive — and here Rorty in fact does his beloved liberal tradition a disservice, since he guarantees that its promise remains opaque and formal — is the willingness to embrace an abstract version of democracy and community at the expense of more substantive and concrete requirements.

The naiveté lies not in the anti-foundationalist credo as such. To strip the conversational "we" of its divine right and power is indeed the first step we (?) must all take today. And Rorty is surely right, and demystifies things considerably, to insist on the difference between a description of a social institution and a philosophical justification for its continuation. The naiveté occurs rather in the suggestion that essentialism can be bypassed as easily or as immediately as Rorty implies. Here it is not Rorty's hermeneutic suspicion which is suspect, but rather the fact that *he is not suspicious enough.*

In simply jettisoning the idea of universality — instead of interrogating it and wresting it free of its essentialist trappings — Rorty tacitly accepts all the terms of classical rationalism. By dismissing the very demand for universalization as so much more transcendentalist hype, Rorty not only accedes to the verdict of the natural law tradition (universal = *eidos* = *telos* etc.,); indeed he relies on this verdict so as to immunize the present from all criticism and change. Any attempt to *expand* or *radicalize* the democratic claims of bourgeois liberalism is quickly deflected on metaphilosophical grounds. Immanent critique is forestalled by an easy gesture towards the bogeyman of Reason. "Universality" — what could have been simply a demand for a deepened or expanded democarcy, what could have been simply the discomfort of a "we"

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which knows itself to be all too narrow and which struggles against this narrowness — is tarred, but too easily, with the essential brush.

But in this way Rorty only *occludes* what were the real contradictions in classical liberal thought (the gap between its theoretical premises and the social practices it sanctioned, between its universalist promise and its exclusionary requirements, between the formal egalitarianism it preached and the material inequalities it legitimated). By promoting a liberalism which need no longer even pretend to loftier "principles," Rorty ends up shielding classical liberalism from all the embarrassments which had typically plagued it. As such he deflects all criticism of an immanent or dialectical sort and thereby seals off the liberal tradition from realizing its latent hope and promise. In handing over totality to its theological guardians, Rorty simply dissolves the tensions within liberalism as such, relieving it of the pressure to "complete" or "sublate" itself. His version remains purely affirmative, which is to say, conservative: a liberalism without apology, without tension, and without the means to negate or transcend itself.

But as such he embalms the present as effectively as did the natural law theorists of the eighteenth century. Whereas the latter sought to hypostatize the present by grounding it in Reason or Nature, Rorty hypostatizes it by immunizing it from philosophical critique. Philosophy formerly colluded by commission, at present by omission. If at one time philosophy sought to buttress the status quo by providing grounds or reasons, it now does so at one remove: it does its accommodation and then quickly washes its hands of the deed. Here restraint becomes the metaphilosophical rule, and abstinence becomes the apology of the day. By relieving the present of even the pressure to legitimate itself, philosophy only ends up "grounding" the given more securely than ever before.

Meanwhile philosophy, fetishized as "general culture," continues as intransigently, as maniacally, as ever — indeed more so. Fleeing the social reality which it at the same time blindly reproduces, philosophy becomes simultaneously both otherworldly (i.e. apolitical) and collusive. Even as it militantly renounces its critical *engagement* or efficacy in the present, it becomes falsely immersed, which is to say passively reproductive of that present.

Effete, cloistered, reduced to the innocuous prettiness of *l'art pour l'art*, philosophy ends up only affirming the tyranny of the consumer society which it can in fact neither negate nor properly engage. It substitutes an illusory *transcendence* for the *critical distance* which is philosophy's real task and promise; it substitutes a blind *collusion* for the *engagement* which would otherwise open up. Simultaneously aestheticized and flatly affirmative — i.e., both excessively and insufficiently "withdrawn" — philosophy bears all the contradictions of the "culture industry" in general. Even as it renounces its worldliness — "wildly irrelevant,"a "distraction" (HM 173f) etc. — it slides inexorably into the very facticity it would ignore or evaporate. Condemned in one blow to both superfluity and positivity, it both reproduces and mystifies the society

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which gave birth to it. "To say that we become different people, that we 'remake' ourselves as we read more, talk more, write more, is simply a dramatic way of saying that the sentences which become true of us by virtue of such activities are . . . more important to us than the sentences which become true of us when we drink more, earn more, and so on." (PMN 359)

Bildung, turned in on itself, becomes the disembodied quest for language. This in turn, conceived on the model of abstract consumption, becomes in the end indistinguishable from the "drinking more, earning more" from which it naively sets itself apart. Sinking back into the banausic everydayness it seeks to escape without engaging, it becomes a question of sheer connoisseurship and the "more."

Culture is both aggrandized and debilitated here, and philosophy both idealized and belittled. The mirror, flattering philosophy's self-importance even as it condemns it to narcissistic self-enclosures, cuts off the critical distance between philosophy and its "lifeworld," and thus simultaneously sequesters and "profanes" it.

To give philosophy both less and more than this would require a *genuine* historicism: it would replace an acquiescent pragmatism with a form of critical *praxis*; it would replace a yea-saying conversation with a speech which has learned to say no.

VII

The conversation, continuing, steamrollers all difference and becomes a night in which all cows are black.

Nowhere is this flattening, this collapse of tension, more evident or more revealing than in Rorty's own conversational practices. This conversation is just about as "monological" as they come. What is stunning here is the systematic way in which Rorty has managed to neutralize the potentially radical force of almost every thinker he encounters. Capacious where he sees connections, sullen where he resists them, Rorty has the assurance of someone who knows the outcome in advance and can accommodate or shrug off all positions. "Difference" slides into uniformity, or else is laughed away as the quirkiness of fools and eggheads. This is domestication with a vengeance: nowhere has "abnormal philosophy" (CP 106) ended up looking so depressingly and reassuringly familiar. Watch Rorty converse.

Rorty "naturalizes" Hegelian historicism to the point of reducing what was, at its finest, a program of immanent critique into an instrument of social adjustment. He melts down the "hermeneutic circle" into the chalk circle of the present, the quiescent reminder that we must "start" — and no doubt end up — "where we are." (SO 12) Heidegger, cured of his "metaphysical" delusions (in this case: his gloomy refusal to "mediate" the Difference), becomes the happy prophet of accommodation. Gadamer's principle of "effective historical consciousness" (*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*) becomes a radical historical immanentism, a sticky inertia punctuated only by the voluntaristic frenzy of the consumer ("an attitude interested not so much in what is out there in the world, or what happened in history, as in what we can get out of nature and

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history for our own uses" [PMN 359]). Rorty reads Habermas as a somewhat misguided liberal reformer, the blander the better, dismissing his residual utopian tension as just so much more metaphysical conceit. He reduces deconstruction to the "slaphappy *je-m'-en-foutisme*" (SR 5) of an indifferent aestheticism; and Derrida himself to a cute little punster who should only learn how to relax.

The "polypragmatic dilettante" (PMN 317) charms all the creatures from out of their caves and toadstools; the Pied Piper soon enough has everyone singing the same old tune. The tune, of course, is the American anthem; James and Dewey wait patiently at the end of every road. (cf CP xviii) To those who step out of beat, or who refuse to learn the words, to whose accent is just too strong, or too weird for good company, Rorty turns on the macho know-nothing act and tunes out the noise —" . . . the word 'Being' is just more trouble than it is worth. I would be happy if Heidegger had never employed it . . ." (SH 267).

Where jovial appeals to good sportsmanship don't work, there is always the threat of expulsion. "We," unswerving in its solidarity, becomes as stern as an Un-american Activities Committee. You don't cooperate, we see no point continuing this conversation. This is, of course, the final privilege of the postmodern "we": no longer pretending to be more than we are, we can now be just what we are — "we" *simpliciter*, a tensionless monad, without discomfort or change. "To be ethnocentric," Rorty reminds us, "is to divide the human race into the people to whom one must justify one's beliefs and the other. The first group — one's *ethnos* — comprises those who share enough of one's beliefs to make fruitful conversation possible." (SO 13) As for "the others" — the "particularly stupid people" (PMN 349), the kooks around the corner whose "explanation of what [they're] up to is so nutty that we brush it aside" (CP 200), the "fanatics" (PDP 26), "the people who have always hoped to become a New Being" (SO 12), and so on — baldly, for it comes down to this: "there are a lot of views," concludes Rorty, "we can simply not take seriously . . ." (SO 12)

By Rorty's own professed hermeneutic standards (PMN 381), the conversation is surely a failure: it is the old search for commensuration, after all, that drives the encounter on. (There is "no difference," as Rorty sees it, between Dewey and Tillich (SH 265); between Dewey and Foucault (CP 11); between Dewey and Heidegger (CP 37ff); or that matter between Heidegger and Carnap (SH 267): when you get rid of all the "transcendental German," (SH 267) you can see that it all sounds just the same.) The "polypragmatic dilettante" becomes indeed in the end indistinguishable from the "cultural overseer" (PMN 317). It is the ironic Olympian cheerfulness of the eternal go-between, obliterating all the differences, bringing it all back home. What Rorty calls "conversation with foreigners" (SO 8) looks indeed like the traditional "conquest" (ibid.); and his tactics of "persuasion" come close to sheer force (cf. SH 263).

A "seamless, undifferentiated 'general text'," remarks Rorty, enthusias-

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tically (DC 3) (speaking, incredibly enough, of the notion of *différance*). To save difference, finally, from the web of the "general text" — this would take some interruption and would risk a degree of force.

To interrupt the conversation: this is not to "*escape* from the conversation to something atemporal" (CP 174); nor is it to *close* off the conversation by offering the last word. To interrupt — I mean something other than either continuation or closure. But it is difficult to interrupt this particular conversation — for I am still not sure it ever began.

Commentary on Tikkun

Moishe Gonzales

With an unusually well-orchestrated PR campaign worthy of the slickest mass commodity, *Tikkun* presents itself as a new Jewish progressive magazine to challenge *Commentary*. But it is well known that many progressive U.S. magazines are largely staffed by Jews and most Jewish intellectuals are generally liberal. This striking redundancy immediately raises suspicion about either its Jewish or its liberal pedigree — or both. The obvious clash between the traditional secularism of progressive thought and the archaic religious appeal casts a shadow both ways. Is it *really* Jewish or is it *really* liberal? And if it somehow manages to be both, what does it mean for present Jewish *and* liberal thought? Answers to these questions are crucial for evaluating not only *Tikkun*, but also to make sense out of the quandaries presently confronting the Left in general and Jewish intellectuals in particular. Given their central location in political and intellectual life, an understanding of the changing character of the latter group is essential to any meaningful analysis of the future of American politics.

A quick leafing through the pages of *Tikkun*'s premiere issue confirms the worst fears. If anything, this is additional documentation for the claim that there may be terminal crisis pervading both Jewish and liberal thought — or liberal Judaism and Jewish liberalism. It results from a confused understanding of what it means to be a liberal and/or a Jew and, in a desperate attempt to patch together a viable *Weltanschauung*, contribute precisely to the malaise it seeks to cure: the intellectual involution represented by *Commentary*. Lacking a clear identity, it cannot project a vision beyond the most trivial political com-

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monplaces of a middle-aged New Left, contraposed to which *Commentary*, its conservatism and dogmatism notwithstanding, can only appear as a rock of coherence, determination and honesty. Thus, even if it did succeed in surviving these traumatic antinomies of birth, *Tikkun* faces an inglorious future of becoming, at best, *Commentary Jr.*

What does *Tikkun* stand for? A careful reading of Lerner's ponderous "founding editorial statement" yields meager results: 1) unconditional support for Israel; and 2) agitprop for Jewish Feminism. The first is problematic precisely because of its obviousness. In the post-Holocaust age, it goes without saying. Do American Jews need *Tikkun* to remind them that they ought to support Israel? *Commentary* settled that issue almost a generation ago. As for the second, it may generate perplexities for those who have some faint recollection of the Old Testament. But if one reads on to what T. Drorah Setel writes about this, all uneasiness supposedly vanishes. Coming from someone described as "currently working on a study guide to Jewish Feminism," it is reassuring to discover that "Judaism is not only about Jews and feminism is not only about women." Very good! So, calling it "Jewish Feminism" is merely a linguistic coincidence. It could well have been labelled — were it to be marketed in Baghdad or Teheran instead of San Francisco and New York — "Islamic Machismo" followed by an equally opportunistic qualification that "Islam is not only about Muslims" and "Machismo is not just about men." This is truly an equal opportunity movement.

It may be unfair, however, to judge *Tikkun* merely by its editorial ideology. What gives new journals their identity are seldom the opening bureaucratic pronouncements, but the people and ideas that constitute their substance. Here too, however, the results are not encouraging. The various authors differ so much on what it is to be Jewish or what it is to be progressive — not to mention what it means to be a progressive Jew — that no clear ideological profile can be surmised by any careful content analysis. In the opening editorial statement Lerner narrates an old Jewish tale about conflicts within a synagogue as to the true Jewish tradition. Unable to decide, the synagogue's warring factions consult the old retired rabbi only to be told that lack of agreement concerning the tradition *is* the tradition. Nice anecdote, but a poor substitute for a programmatic statement. Yet, it is precisely in exemplifying a much broader quandary that *Tikkun* is symptomatic of more than the contradictory outlook of a particular ethnic subgroup. It typifies the present predicament of the American Left.

Paradoxically enough, this is precisely the message of Christopher Lasch's account, inexplicably mistitled "What's Wrong with the Right?" The article also deals, first and foremost, with "What's Wrong with the Left!" Neither a Jew nor, according to many, a radical, Lasch pulls no punches: "The idea of a 'left' has outlived its historical time and needs to be decently buried." In so doing he may have unwittingly written *Tikkun*'s obituary. Most of the rest of the articles recycle that very same lame left ideology Lasch encourages the readers to leave behind. Harold Jacob's self-congratulatory misreading of

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"The Lesson of Viet Nam"; Boyte-Evans' nostalgia about long-gone voluntary associations, Waskow's re-statement of the 1950ish anti-war rhetoric, or Wolfe's self-serving apology for state funding of sociological research, all ring hollow as appropriately-edited-for-TV-audiences re-runs of the old counter-culture's "The Way We Were."

Take "the lesson of the Viet Nam war." Was it that the war was successfully stopped only after monopoly capital interests withdrew their support for it years after the National Guard's bullets had annihilated the anti-war movement at Kent State? No: "the real lesson of Vietnam is that military superiority does not guarantee political victory." Yet, the North Vietnamese Army's military superiority certainly guaranteed political victory over the Viet Cong immediately after the Americans departed. And military superiority guaranteed political victory even better in Poland when Jaruzelsky marshal-lawed Solidarity out of existence. The American pull out of Viet Nam did not come about because, as Jacob naively intimates, "what ordinary people think and do . . . can make a profound difference" but, rather, it was primarily the result of China in the early 1970s re-aligning itself with the U.S. against a USSR ready to invade its Northern borders and to launch "surgical strikes." It was no longer necessary then for the U.S. to waste time and efforts over a relatively insignificant patch of real estate rapidly on its way to becoming strategically meaningless. The populist lesson Jacob pretends to learn from Viet Nam could have been easily deduced from dusty Trotskyist texts in the late 1950s. The real tragedy in this didactic fraud, however, is that Jacob's account quickly becomes a crude apology for Vietnam's totalitarian and imperialist regime since, allegedly, "people trying to rebuilt the country afterwards may find themselves resorting to undemocratic methods and may even abandon some of the goals that originally led them into battle." The same, of course, applies to Comrade Pol Pot, Stalin, etc.

Less pernicious, but equally naive, is Boyte and Evans' rediscovery of voluntary associations, not so much as a source of democratic change, but as a covert substitute for the new discredited and rapidly vanishing "revolutionary" working class. Thus, their demogogic celebration of the civil rights movement makes no reference to the role played by the Ford Foundation as a key funding source, the extent to which the civil rights movement paved the way for Northern capital's penetration of the South and, worse of all, the scandalous fact that, over two decades after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s success, the situation of American ghetto Blacks today is even worse than it was then. *That* type of formal democratic change came about only when it finally happened to coincide with Northern capitalist interests and, not surprisingly, has had little positive impact on the lives of poor Blacks as a whole. Worse yet, Boyte and Evans conveniently forget that the Klu Klux Klan, Pro-life groups, etc. are also voluntary associations. They argue that ". . . ethnic associations and saloons" have been important "for the emergence of working class protest and culture." True enough: the most consequential "ethnic association" in the 20th century did in fact originate in a Bavarian saloon. And, of course, working

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class and Jewish culture will never be the same because of it.

The obvious point is that if the political system is actually democratic, and very few will doubt that about the U.S. today, then social movements turn out to be essentially undemocratic efforts to promote hidden agendas by impatient minorities unwilling to play by the established rules of the game. Or, when driven by authentic moral zeal, as in the case of Arthur Waskow's proposal of "Transarmament 2000," the analysis is so one-sided as to not only misread the problem, but also generate counterproductive projects.

In updating well-worn 1950s ban-the-bomb arguments, Waskow misses the most significant developments in the arms race in the mid-1980s: the increasing irrelevance of the overabundance of nuclear missiles and the growing political-economic significance of military Keynesianism. Thus, it has come to pass that, in the Icelandic Summit, agreement could not be reached only over the *testing* of SDI in space during the next ten years, after it had been agreed to eventually eliminate all nuclear missiles. Why did the U.S. have to insist on testing SDI — a system to shoot down nuclear missiles in space after all such missiles will have presumably been eliminated — and the USSR remain equally firm in its effective suppression when the already-agreed-upon elimination of nuclear missiles would have rendered it obviously obsolete? And to add insult to injury, there is practically no serious scientist familiar with the project who really thinks that SDI can work as as effective anti-missile shield. The hypothesis of a senile U.S. President negotiating with a USSR First Secretary that has imbibed a little too much vodka is not very plausible. Rather, what is at stake is not purely military superiority, but a strategy to strengthen U.S. world supremacy through the deployment of an historically unprecedented R. & D. effort meant to impose an international division of labor controlled and directed from Washington. It is well known that, unlike in the USSR where defense and consumer industries operate quite independently of each other, in the U.S. military research has immediate civilian repercussions. Thus, the massive SDI research, if carried out, will inevitably give U.S. high-tech industries unchallenged world advantage and successfully marginalize Japan and Western Europe primarily to more traditional industrial production, and the Third World as well as the USSR — at least, in terms of participation in international trade — to providers of raw materials and agricultural goods. Given the huge differences in pricing structures between high-tech goods and traditional industrial commodities or agricultural products, the imposition of the projected international division of labor will mean a new and much more effective *Pax Americana*.

While both Reagan and Gorbachev seem to understand this very well, Waskow is still charging against the windmills of nuclear disarmament with "transarmament" — a "new and not too improved" version of the battered 1950s slogan "better red than dead." Clearly, history has long since passed him by. Major reductions in nuclear armaments will certainly come about in the next few years, not because of popular moral outrage, but because of the military, political and economic obsolescence of that type of hardware. And

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the real issues of international economic justice, quality of life, ecology, growing inequality, etc. will remain hidden to a liberal imagination blinded by moral self-righteousness and ideological fog.

Tikkun proposes to repair left-liberal ideological ruins in order "to transform the world." The world it has in mind, however, is yesterday's world. The battles it fights have long since been lost. Waskow seriously thinks that, because in the 1972-1979 period "serious Soviet/American arms-control negotiations and important commerical deals were under way, large numbers of Soviet Jews were permitted to leave," the U.S. should continue that policy of detente which has also resulted in Afghanistan, the Brezhnev doctrine of the irreversability of Soviet expansion, and *de facto* Soviet nuclear parity. Presumably, there is nothing wrong with the Russians holding Jews and international hostages and the U.S. dealing with this type of gangsterism as an equal partner in negotiating world peace. That the Russians in this context make Al Capone look downright decent does not bother Waskow. Compared with the challenge of Reagan's Star Wars offensive, Waskow's wimpish and morally untenable proposal is not even minimally worth discussing — especially since what is really at stake is not nuclear war between the super-powers which has long since become an impossibility, but an economic and political struggle between two conflicting world systems. And today even the old argument about the wasteful nature of this bizarre way of steering capitalist development no longer applies. It is probably less wasteful than other alternative "rational" central planning and, given the political logic of "really existing democracies," one of very few ways to achieve the projected objectives. It took the development of the Department of Housing and Urban Development or of the Department of Education to make the U.S. Defense Department look like a paragon of austerity and efficiency.

Nowhere is the nostalgia for yesteryear's way of posing the problems more obvious than in Alan Wolfe's unashamed begging for renewed pork-barrelling of academic sociology. Apparently unaware of the vital connection between the bureaucratic apparatus of the welfare state and sociology as its research arm meant to provide relatively reliable information necessary to formulate social policy, Wolfe abstracts the issue to the level of moral philosophy where it becomes another melodrama between the legendary cowboys and Indians. Riding at the head of the academic cavalry in a white horse is sociology allegedly "based on a world-view that is inherently democratic." Teaching in C.U.N.Y.'s Sociology Department where social-democratic political credentials are immensely more crucial than academic ones, Wolfe may not have heard of or, more charitably, he has probably forgotten about structural-functionalism, ethnomethodology, and the rest of the schools of sociology Gouldner lumped together under the heading of "academic sociology" in contraposition to an equal hodge-podge category of "Marxism." There is nothing inherently democratic, radical or progressive in sociology as an aspiring neutral science of society whose ahistorical methodology forces it to reify the given above and beyond any "ought," thus necessarily apologizing for the

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status quo. Even Marx, when later in life he edited the revolutionary gut out of the *Grundrisse* and re-cycled it as the scientifically respectable *Capital*, ended up with an exceptional opus, yet typical as a treatise of "objective" scientific economics or sociology which a Hilferding or a Schumpeter could easily turn into a sophisticated capitalist apology. Bernsteinianized Marxism could be awakened out of its conservative reformist slumber only by the extra-scientific voluntarism of a Lenin, or by fudging the global context *à la* Luxemburg.

Wolfe actually believes that the conservatives' unsuccessfully attempted cut-backs for sociological research were motivated by the sudden realization that "sociology may well have dangerous implications for conservatives, regardless of the particular politics of the sociologists." This is, presumably, because for Wolfe "The first task of the sociologist is to carve out a place for the self, to develop a strategy that would enable people to find their authenticity . . ." Why should conservatives be threatened by this cut-rate existentialist mush parading as sociology? Today the old discredited bureaucratic apparatus of the welfare state is being displaced by a strategy of regulated bureaucratic privatization. This allows as much control as before without having to do any direct managing, now subcontracted to a new monopolistic corporate branch. In this context, the research arm of the bureaucracy becomes obsolete and redundant since it no longer has a healthy body to which it can remain attached. Thus sociology, no longer needed in Washington, is forced to return home to collect the equivalent of academic welfare payments by teaching once again recalcitrant undergraduates. Conservatives are not afraid of sociology; they simply have no use for it the way the New Deal and the Great Society did. After the spectacular failures in the wake of the first Coleman Report spearheading the caravan of school buses that accelerated whites' flight into suburbia, thus intensifying the re-segregation of inner cities, the Moynahan Report hushering in massive federal intervention and the further disintegration of Black family structure; and the Pruitt-Igoe public housing project that was ultimately rationalized only by means of explosives, sociology today is pretty well discredited. Injections of Wolfe's existential moralizing will not make it any more credible. The lush days of generous federal funding are over: now the sociologists face the harsh reality that, like everyone else in academia, they will have to earn an honest living by processing students and reproducing predominant Leftist cultural values.

Enough with *Tikkun*'s progressive pretense. At best, it only manages to repackage worn out New Left hopes and aspirations which went nowhere twenty years ago when, to use Marx' popular metaphor, they were at least a genuine tragedy.

As for the Jewish component, the situation is more complex and multi-dimensional. Attempting to represent everyone and his brother-in-law, the editors have tikkuned around a little too much. Consequently, the positions represented range all the way from right to "progressive." But if *Tikkun* is to be an alternative to *Commentary*, why this mish-mash? Why give so much space to

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Jewish fundamentalism and so little to the "progressive" wing? Why do Eli Zeretsky and Arthur Green end up taking over twice as much space as Michael Waltzer, Gordon Fellman and Norman Birnbaum combined? And in between all sorts of quasi-surrealist positions fill the pages. Thus, Gar Alperowitz wants to deconstruct the U.S. in order to make government more accessible to people; Laura Geller calls for a reconstitution of Jewish rituals because existing ones could not deal with the trauma of her *Menarche*; and Zalman Schlacter-Shalomi advocates "kosher electricity," the "gentling of Isreal," while, in his own words, he claims to be "intertyping" with the typewriter in front of him.

What progressive position can possibly come out of Zeretsky's effort to evaluate Western history from the viewpoint of Jewish national history? And how is it possible to reconcile this fanatical parochialism with what Fellman defends as the best traditions of Jewish internationalism? A distant voice from the midst of the corn belt in Columbia, Mo. (and not Colombus, as claimed in the back cover) — few miles north of the Bible Belt — Zeretsky's call for Jewish nationalism and particularism is a throw-back to the closed defensive posture of the beleaguered Jews of the Middle Ages, hardly defensible within the context of American cultural pluralism. Such an approach is too conservative even for *Commentary* to entertain.

The real burning issue in the Jewish world has nothing to do with mystifications such as "Jewish national history" and is squarely and courageously posed by Waltzer: "what kind of state is a Jewish state?" Although any pronouncement about Israel by outsiders is bound to be either inappropriate or wrong, the answer he provides is strikingly simple: "it should be pretty much like New York." Accordingly, "the periphery has something to teach the center, namely how the center might incorporate in principle what it already incorporates in fact, the pluralism of the periphery." This view is further elaborated by Birnbaum who explicitly appeals to the legacy of the Enlightenment and the need for *renewal* of the modern tradition. In sharp contrast to Lerner's antinomic juxtaposition of conflictual traditions, this is the only hope for moving beyond the present Jewish dilemma contraposing a decrepit ethnocentric 19th century nationalism to a post-Enlightenment assimilationist strategy too compromised by the trauma of the Holocaust.

This renewal, which Birnbaum advocates as the most authentic Jewish tradition, however, cannot remain trapped in a Jewish intellectual ghetto blinded by its own history of victimization from seeing or even denying others' suffering. It is shocking, therefore, to read Birnbaum's otherwise excellent statement and find that "the idea of a persecuted German minority in the USSR is a political fabrication of the German right." As much as one can sympathize with Birnbaum's unwillingness to give the German right the time of day, and to presume them guilty unless otherwise proven innocent, this is no ground for becoming an accomplice to another less publicized and consequently less known — but not thereby less abhorrent — Soviet crime: the discrimination, repression and deportation of other non-Jewish minorities such

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as the Volga Germans and the Crimean Tatars. Why didn't Birnbaum or *Tikkun*'s editors bother to check the facts before publishing something so patently false and politically stupid? Any cursory consultation of the relevant literature (none of which has anything to do with the German right) would have prevented such an embarrassment. Fred C. Koch's *The Volga German* has been available for almost a decade now, and it carefully documents the history of these unfortunate people, almost 100,000 of whom have already managed to emigrate to West Germany. And even if one only stuck to Jewish sources, it would have been practically impossible to remain so ignorant on the subject since almost all discussions of the emigration of Soviet Jews mention other similarly afflicted minorities (e.g., Victor Zaslavsky and Robert J. Brym, *Soviet Jewish Emigration and Soviet Nationality Policy*). The situation of the Volga Germans is worse than that of Soviet Jews since they are primarily agricultural workers with no significant number of intellectuals among them to articulate their plight. And the situation of the Crimean Tatars is worse yet, since not only do they lack any significant number of intellectuals in their midst to publicize their interests but, unlike Israel and West Germany for Soviet Jews and Volga Germans, they have no outside powerful state with a state in their fate. It must never come to pass that the horrors of the Holocaust make us forget about the Armenians, or that the misery of Soviet Jews make us callous with respect to similarly oppressed Soviet minorities such as the Volga Germans and the Crimean Tatars.

Fortunately, *Tikkun* also publishes some fiction whose quality is somewhat better than its non-fiction. A short story by Susan Sobel-Feldman tells of the author's relation to her former lover Stuie Zelinsky while they were living in New York and wading their way through late adolescence. It is a typical story of Jewish assimilation, with Stuie ending up as a family doctor in Joliet, Ill., and the author writing stories in San Francisco. Nothing exceptional, other than the fact that the story opens with the blunt statement that "Stuie Zelinsky married an Irish girl which killed his mother." Obviously, the "killing" is metaphorical, but also symbolic of how Stuie's fading in the American Mid-West prefigures both an irreversible assimilation as well as the "killing" of the tradition — his mother. The lesson is unavoidable: if Jews can make it happily in San Francisco and Joliet with normal gentile mates, they do not need Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. And this kills the mother, the distinct tradition, much more effectively than any progrom or religious bigotry. Is this an unhappy ending?

Tikkun has married the Irish girl, but is desperately trying not to kill the mother. Yet, the mother will die and all the artificial respiration and life-sustaining equipment rushed in by the fundamentalists will not be enough to keep her alive — unless the Irish girl goes. But can the Irish girl go, now that there are the kids and the practice and the mortgage? What is likely to happen is that the mother is not really killed, but dies a peaceful natural death like all mothers and becomes a dear memory tucked away with other similar memories rapidly fading into the past.

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Unlike *Commentary* whose Jewishness and *Realpolitik* are those of an earlier generation embroiled in the guilt of not having done enough to prevent the Holocaust and the resulting tribulations associated with the birth of Israel, *Tikkun* is equally scarred by the 1960s. Thus, to effectively rival *Commentary*, *Tikkun* will have to relegate its Jewishness to a readily accessible closet in the back pages under the rubric of "Religion" or "Judaica," and get its act together in political, social and economic matters. As it is, the yarmulke does not work too well as a fig-leaf to prudishly hide socio-political impotence.

Traditionalizing the Past: Brooks' Lost in America

Mas'ud Zavarzadeh

Brooks' *Lost in America* is a somewhat parodic and amused exploration of the fantasy of freedom. But it is also an ideological maneuver to reinscribe, albeit humorously, the existing economic order by "showing" all oppostition as impractical. In spite of itself, the film is more a discourse on history and the need for a homogenized "tradition" in a consumer society than what it professes to be: an account of self-origination. It thus demonstrates that the fate of individuals cannot be scrutinized outside history.

The relation between contemporary American culture and the past is fraught with contradictions engendered by American society's view of social "change." America, as a consumer society, regards change as a sign of vitality and the negation of inertia, of the past, of history. While it sees change as unlimited possibility, it nevertheless fears change because "new" also produces discontinuity and disorientation. Change, therefore, is seen in a contradictory way as a breakthrough (the entrepreneurial imagination) but also as disguised chaos which undermines an orderly society's protection of individual rights and property. American thinkers, artists and civil leaders are pressured to resolve these contradictions; to make change safe and orderly and consequently to insure that "change" always serves dominant interests. Things appear to change but only so that existing relations can be perpetually reproduced. Late capitalism requires equating change with progress and civilization since only the changing "good life" will lead to greater consumption, the

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hallmark of moving into the future and discarding the past.

To make change harmless and orderly, American culture falls back on history and recuperates the discarded past. However, in order to instrumentalize this past for the present, it has to be first turned into "tradition." The invention of tradition makes change an uninterrupted continuity.

Tradition is a collective of familiar ways of making sense of the world according to an ideological agenda. The role of ideology is, however, suppressed so that the reality presented by tradition will seem inevitable, natural and universal. This transformation of history into tradition removes the opacity of the past, rendering it transparent in the interest of the present. The concerns of the present, therefore, are represented not merely as interests of the moment but as permanent ones. Tradition, in other words, dehistoricizes history and produces a timeless instance in which things change without becoming different. The past seems inscribed in the present as well as the future; thus change is always a move towards the past not away from it. This ambiguous view is clearly captured in the film *Back to the Future* in which the needs of the present reinvent the past, thereby preparing for change which is always beneficent and never dislocating. *Back to the Future*, however, is not the only film attempting to resolve this cultural contradiction: the question dominates almost contemporary films. A more indirect attempt is Albert Brooks' *Lost in America*, which deals with the problem by traditionalizing the past in a homogeneous history.

A homogeneous past, like all ideological versions of history, is oddly ahistorical, if not outright anti-historical. History is a free-floating moment, not the effect of economic, political, legal and philosophical social life, but a moral fable. In this moral fable, history as struggle is removed, and replaced with a generalized, vague and evolutionary march of events. This history is "nostalgia" and circulates for the consumption of those who need stability while confronting change. In nostalgia they retreat from the changing present but, paradoxically, they find that the remote nostalgic past is in an uncanny way the present. The changing present loses its alien face and merges with the equally "charming" traditionalized past in a panhistorical moment. Change (consumption) is made palatable without disrupting existing social relations. Nostalgia is an ideological apparatus and neither a harmless nor a trivial distraction.

The film's opening scene shows David and Linda Howard having late night anxieties about David's forthcoming promotion in an advertising agency, in which he has worked for eight years, and second thoughts about their new $440,000 home. Their upward mobility and personal development are inextricably intertwined, and they hope that by unblocking one through a new promotion the other will also be stimulated. Linda is quite straightforward about their predicament when talking later with a co-worker, "Nothing is changing anymore, we've just stopped." She is also quite aware that the promotion may not inaugurate the hoped-for change and she may have to resort to divorce to separate them from their past in order to start moving in new directions. To

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leave the past, in other words, is to enter the future. The immobility that has paralyzed their life, however, is concealed by the profusion of signs of consumption: their combined salary is over $100,000.00; they have an expensive new house, and at the office David spends most of his time on the phone discussing the color and material of the upholstery for the Mercedes-Benz he intends to buy after his expected promotion to senior vice-president. David's job as the "creative director" of the West Coast division of an ad agency is an index of his relation with that society; he is not a simple consumer but the custodian of consumerism.

The gulf between their upward mobility and their inward stasis informs what is "not-said" in the film. When David is told, contrary to indications given him by his boss and his friends, that not only is he not getting the desired promotion but is being transferred to New York, the relation between appearance and reality becomes absolutely confused. His angry protest against this discrepancy and the disruption of his expectations gets him fired. Incoherence forces David to look for a new more reliable reality which will not evaporate as quickly as the reality of the ad agency. David and Linda sell their belongings and with a "nest egg" of about $200,000.00 begin a journey across America — a journey whose purpose is to renew them and restart "change" in their lives. They realize that, as long as they hold onto their private past, such change is not possible. So while the ostensible journey is from the present to the future, their actual goal is to join the collective past and history of people they believe have been able to change and achieve happiness. The destination is the past because, as their own life testifies, the present (and by implication the future) is sterile. They use the present to reach an authentic mode of being which they believe exists only in the past. The past is "otherness," something that cannot possibly be integrated into the sterile present and its appendage, the future. They choose the past represented by those who have "dropped out" in protest against the present. They too will leave society, "touch Indians" as David says, and, as part of this collective and dissenting margin, be renewed. "Linda, this is just like *Easy Rider*," David declares at the outset of their journey, "Only now its our turn."

They leave Los Angeles to the tune of "Born to be Wild" in their brand new Winnebago headed for Las Vegas — a place where they intend to get remarried as a symbolic geture of renewal. Remarrying marks the intense emotions they would like to bring to their stagnant life and rejects the logical, functional present. The road to the past, the film amusingly implies, is filled with traps and hardship. In Las Vegas, they lose all their money (the "nest egg" is broken), and this loss is the final break with their own past and the first sign of the beginning of a new life. The sharp difference between the new and the old is made clear when David, using skills acquired in advertising, fails to persuade the casino manager to return their money as part of a publicity campaign. When the manager rationally explains that a casino does not need the image of big-hearted generosity, David is once more confronted with a gap between appearance and reality. He cannot comprehend a business, even a

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casino, not desiring a benevolent image.

David and Linda are "bad readers" — that is to say readers for whom only familiar signs have a reliable meaning and for whom the unfamiliar is meaningless and confused. When Linda loses their money, placing David and herself in a completely new situation, neither can "read" the event. David takes the event (Linda's losing money) to be moral in nature; Linda, according to him, is "irresponsible," while Linda's reading is essentially psychoanalytical. She thinks she "blew" all their money gambling because of her pent up emotions caused by years of working in an office that did not even have a window. Neither can go beyond the "moral" or "psychological." The fact that wanting to win, to "beat the house," to accumulate more money, and to provoke the admiration of others at the gambling table might have "caused" the *loss* does not occur because to them they are unaware of the ideology that produced them and instilled "competition" in them. They are also unable to understand what is happening to their own relationship, especially during its post-Las Vegas phase. They privatize their difficulty in coping with the casino episode, and it is only after Linda has temporarily left David and hitched a ride with a fugitive that David re-interprets her act. What is happening to them only becomes clear after they start looking for jobs to support themselves, i.e., in the economic sphere.

Throughout the film, David and Linda are very conscious of the relation between history, change and the present. In the very first scene, Linda explains their reasons for buying a new house in terms of more "space" while David vehemently objects to that mode of understanding. He believes a house is more than so much space, because if it were just a question of space they could have simply rented a few lockers. A house, he implies, is nothing less than the history that one develops with it; it is through such a history that the house is transformed into a home. David also emphasizes his personal "history" in the ad agency. Working eight years for the agency entitles him, he feels, to the position of senior vice-president. In other words, his past should move him into the future. Yet, he is denied the future and transfered to a new account and a new director in New York. He responds to the agency's rejection of his past and betrayal of his future by shouting at his co-workers, warning them that "I have seen the future, and it is a bald-headed man from New York." The failed promotion leads him to reject his past; while his college classmates were spending their time finding themselves, he was, he now knows, wrongly devoting himself to business management studies. He finds that his version of history was wrong: the future does not follow the route he had anticipated. Now he wants to rewrite his history with a journey of renewal into the collective past of the nation's dissidents. For Linda the only way to move into the future without David's promotion is to "divorce" the past. In going along with David on the journey and selling their house and property, she joins him in the attempt to rewrite history.

In their new life change and the future are represented by two frightening experiences: Las Vegas — the site of "action" — and Hoover Dam — the

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emblem of change and technology. Hoover Dam is simultaneously fascinating and frightening; it is fascinating in its taming power but frightening in that it conceals the tremendous destructive energy that could be unleashed at any moment, just as Linda's Las Vegas "action" is a disturbing unleashing of the forces of change and transformation (from well-paid slavery in a windowless office to the impoverished freedom and open spaces of the Nevada desert).

In their search for new grounds in their life, David and Linda want to get as far away from the present and their current life as possible. The outer limits of their journey, however, are already determined by the film *Easy Rider*. The film, in fact, becomes a measure of their new life and more than a mere personal point of reference. *Easy Rider* acquires a symbolic dimension on at least two levels: thematically it is a cognitive frame for David and Linda, and aesthetically it gives *Lost in America* self-reflexivity. *Lost in America* absorbs *Easy Rider* and thus presents itself as a film with a history. In other words, by means of *Easy Rider*, *Lost in America* poses the question of change and transformation.

Easy Rider is the standard against which the characters of the film are tested. The manager of the casino, who refuses to give their money back and is fond of Wayne Newton, has not seen *Easy Rider*, nor has the employment agent who derides David for leaving his $100,000.00 a year job in order to find himself. He has, however, seen *Easy Money*, a rather vulgar film starring Rodney Dangerfield. In contrast to these two older people, the middle-aged highway patrolman who stops them for speeding in Arizona has seen the film many times. Linda then suggests that since they are members of the same community — those who saw *Easy Rider* and for whom the film constitutes a major experience — the patrolman should let them go. He agrees. Both the very old and the very young, such as Skippy, the adolescent manager of the hamburger joint in which Linda finally gets a job, have not seen *Easy Rider*. *Easy Rider* is the only common cultural experience that binds these middle aged people.

Easy Rider is about discontinuity and understanding in America. As the lawyer who accompanies the two hippie protagonists of the film puts it, "You know, this used to be a helluva good country. I can't understand what's going on in it." The break that the two hippies imply with their behavior is between the established American commonsensical mode of knowing, represented in its most narrow concerns by the rednecks they encounter on the road and who harass them (eventually shooting them) and their own anti-commonsensical modes of making sense. For the most part, they act out this anti-commonsensical approach — high on drugs, traveling on odd-looking motorcycle to the beat of the music of Steppenwolf, Jimi Hendrix, Electric Prunes, etc. Above all, they do not talk. Through silence (called "self-righteous taciturnity" by one infuriated critic) they take their stand: they want to drop out of consumer society and the Western modes of knowing. One of the opening songs of the film, "I Smoke a Lot of Grass," for example, indicates their disgust with the "logic" of bourgeois society and their desire for an unmediated understanding independent of rationality, through breaking down the barriers of rationality. They are retreating from the existing "present" and are reluctant to enter the

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"future" in the customary, commonsensical and conformist manner. However, their claim to dropping out remains just that — a claim. Their entire journey of stepping beyond Western life and knowledge has been made possible by selling heroin (which they have smuggled from Mexico) to satisfy the very consumer society they denigrate. The question here is not a mere contradiction between their claim and their life, but the possibility of "dropping out" and, in the absence of such a possibility, the forms of resistance to late capitalism. The two hippies privatize the challenging of predominant values and, in "dropping out," make their separate peace with the world. But this private peace is not a substitute for a political critique; it reproduces, in its logic, the very conditions from which they claim to want to escape, namely taking care of one's own interests and attending to one's own desires. Instead of a concrete history of dissenting citizens against the ruling regime, the two hippies have traditionalized the "Bohemian." One gets a glimpse of their prototype when they visit a hippie commune — a site of "cut rate spirituality," as one critic has put it. They do what they fantasize a bohemian should do to break with the mainstream. In their traditionalization of the (Bohemian) past, they are as much involved in nostalgia as their ostensible opponents, the rednecks, or their lawyer friend, all of whom traditionalize the past and fantasize about an America that never existed. It is by authority of that fantastic America that the rednecks seek to contain the forces of change represented by the two bikers. In the bikers they see that side of "change" and "future" which is a barely veiled chaos and anarchy — an anarchy that must be eliminated.

Although David and Linda identify with the two hippies as uncompromising rebels, they also belong with the rednecks. Like the rednecks, David and Linda traditionalize the past that is left for them, but this past left by the hippies is a homogenized bohemian past. Thus they become nostalgic about the biker rather than dwelling on the historical legacy of dissent in the United States. Like the bikers, they lack a political critique of the institutions from which they seek to escape. The bikers homogenize dissent in America and, by traditionalizing bohemian modes of thinking, attempt to reach some transcendental moment, as anti-historical and apolitical as the ideological American history. The rednecks homogenize a pastoral veiw of America that is a nostalgia for the ethics of a small town. David and Linda end up homogenizing the homogenized modes of dissent left by *Easy Rider*. The film advertisements acquire a rather ironic side today. *Easy Rider* has been described as a film about two persons who are "in search of America," but, in the words of the publicity materials, "They couldn't find it anywhere." They failed because their America belongs to nostalgia and not history.

Lost in America both refers to *Easy Rider* and comments on it by reproducing some of its major components. The results, however, are not one-sided: in commenting on *Easy Rider*, *Lost in America* comments on its own underlying ideology. As David says, "Linda this is just like *Easy Rider*; only now it's our turn." Their "turn" takes them over to nostalgia, a rehearsal that was rehearsed by the hippies in *Easy Rider* through their nostalgia for a bohemian

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lifestyle. David's and Linda's journey in *Lost in America* is even patterned on the trip taken by the two hippies in *Easy Rider* from California to Florida. The biker's journey starts by having scored a big drug deal; they are literally loaded with money when they embark on their trip. The Howards are similarly loaded with money from selling their assets. The money in both cases comes from pandering to the appetites of a consumer society. One couple sells heroin; the other couple creates advertisements: both are often addictive. Obviously, for both money is the enabling condition of freedom! The bikers immerse themselves in a joyful, depressurizing indulgence at the New Orleans Mardi Gras; David and Linda go to Las Vegas to get remarried. The bikers visit a very expensive brothel while in New Orleans; David and Linda pay a $100.00 bribe to the desk clerk to get the best honeymoon suite in the casino hotel and (paradoxically) end up with heart shaped beds and a gaudy brothel atmosphere. ("If Liberace had children," David comments in bitterness, "this is where they'd live.") The bikers go on an acid trip in a cemetery; Linda goes on a gambling binge. Both couples encounter killers; in *Easy Rider* the couple are actually shot, but in *Lost in America* the ex-convict merely bloodies David's nose and threatens to come back and make David "history."

Lost in America not only makes fun of David and Linda but ridicules *Easy Rider*'s structure and themes. The satire directed at David and Linda is overt. David in his brand new Winnebago (his bike!) passes a motorcyclist (who is involved in his own fashion in the nostalgia about bikers of the 1960s) and gives him a thumbs-up sign to which the biker returns David the finger. The anonymous biker obviously thinks of himself as the authentic rebel and views with contempt David's and Linda's huge middle-class vehicle and its contents. But there are no original bikers, only competing versions of nostalgia. Each nostalgia has a truth claim to history. By displaying these various clashing views of the authentic mode of "dropping out" and rebelling against contemporary consumer society, *Lost in America* trivializes opposition. By showing David and the biker in an exchange of gestures and by referring the genealogy of both back to *Easy Rider* (which is in turn a subject of ridicule in *Lost in America*), Brooks implies that all modes of opposition are only an imitation of an imitation and dropping out is a dream, a private fantasy. Therefore, why not acquiesce to the existing order of things? *Lost in America*, in other words, is situated in an ideological space in which any form of dissent is a source of endless amusement for those who do not get involved in dissent but remain mere observers. *Lost in America* does not critique Linda and David, it makes fun of them. Similarly in ridiculing *Easy Rider* by revealing the comic underside of its overly serious themes, *Lost in America* not only denies the possibility of a political critique in the past but also expresses doubts about its possibility in the present or in the future. *Lost in America* never inquires into the desire to dissent; the film merely trivializes it by making fun of its inadequacies. The implicit logic is that all modes of dissent are as ridiculous as the life we now live. So why bother to change? This logic is, obviously, based on the comfortable equation that *Lost in America* makes between *Easy Rider* and an oppositional politics.

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Such equation, more than anything else in the film, unmasks what is "not-said" in the film. In the last instance, the film reproduces the idea of non-disruptive change and a traditionalized the past as the guarantor of a civilized life. Dissent is a transient action undertaken by the immature; the adult life is lived in the traditionalized space of an uninterrupted history relating the past without displacement to the present and the future.

In fact, the film offers a frightening view of a disrupted, mutant future which has not gradually evolved from the present and the past. In the first image, the future is represented by the "bald-headed man from New York" — the ad executive, for whom David would have to work. New York is the site of remoteness and urban decay and such a move leads to disruption and chaos. Another image of the future is even more calamitous and displacing. When the highway patrolman lets David and Linda go without ticketing them, they try to return the friendly gesture by asking him if he has seen a film called *The Terminator.* When the patrolman answers, "No, but I've heard about it," David tells him he should see the film and that he looks like the terminator. *The Terminator* is a nightmare about what the future will do to the human race. It is a film focused on the action of a robot terminator (played by Arnold Schwarzenegger) clad in jackboots and fingerless gloves made of studded leather. He is sent back from the year 2029 to the present to kill a waitress whose crime is that her yet-unconceived son will lead humankind to victory in World War IV. The view of the future represented in the figure of the automaton Schwarzenegger is one of uncontained brutality and the annihilation of anything that stands in its way; the future is part man, part metal. It is mutant — a chaotic change which has anarchically gotten out of control. Again, in *The Terminator* there is no future — the reason the film is quoted in *Lost in America.* Change is always frightening.

For David then the future, the negation of the past, is either a bald-headed man from the site of urban decay and decadence or a computerized automaton bent on assassinating human beings. *Lost in America* by its references to *Easy Rider*, on the one hand, and *The Terminator*, on the other, presents only two options: escape into a pastoral past or life in a mutant future; the trees or the jungle of metal. But the present state is not worth living. By framing the human options available as a choice between a nonexisting past and an equally unclear future, the political critique of the present is reduced to an extended satire which can at best (if successful) amuse and provide some distance from life in a late capitalist state. *Lost in America* reinscribes the present rather than questions it.

In fact *Lost in America*, having taught David and Linda a lesson by displacing them and showing them the hardship of unemployment and homelessness, quite overtly resituates them in the present and forecloses any opposition. After serving as an assistant manager to an adolescent boy in a hot dog joint, Linda is ready to go back anywhere, and David whose stint as a crossing guard is nothing but an extended humiliation by children is ready to go even to New York. They accept their position but with a slight difference: now they do not

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seem to take themselves so seriously. David, upon arriving in New York, spots Brad, and although he is clad in a business suite and seems quite serious outwardly, he chases Brad in a rather playful manner. The film ends with the two seeming to be engaged in an adult version of hide-and-seek. All David can do is to start playing after a fairly long period of "seriousness." The question of "dropping out" of society, David's desire for opposition, is erased. David's and Linda's desire for change is "shown" to be a misplaced desire: adults cannot step out of the dominant culture. And yes, this is absurd, but life has absurd moments; all one has to do at such times is to keep one's skeptical sense of distance and sense of humor. Skepticism and a sense of humor are, of course, two powerful ideological strategies used to trivialize history and change. Within such an ideological context, change, especially a violent one such as that undertaken by David and Linda, leads nowhere: the only change that the film allows David and Linda is a change of scenery, from Los Angeles to New York!

Autonomy and Redemption: Reply to Gonzales, Breines and Wolin

Joel Whitebook

My intention in writing "The Politics of Redemption" (*Telos* #63) — which was admittedly polemical and therefore somewhat overstated — was in part to stimulate theoretical controversy within the journal. It seemed at the time that *Telos* was suffering from stagnation camouflaged by animated political debates, and that an open and even heated discussion of basic theoretical issues might prove healthy and productive. I was therefore pleased to see the responses to my article and welcome the opportunity to clarify and elaborate my position.

I would now state my thesis in the following way: Modernity is a *fundamentally ambivalent* — if not antinomic — phenomenon which requires a sufficiently differentiated conceptual scheme to capture the elements of that ambivalence; contrawise, an insufficiently differentiated theory cannot do justice to that ambivalence and *mutatis mutandis* to the social, political and historical situation in which we find ourselves. The fact that almost every significant phenomenon that confronts us in the modern world is shot through with ambiguity

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often makes it difficult to say what is "progressive" or "conservative" in the present context; indeed, it raises the very question of whether we should continue to employ those terms in the first place. In my original article I argued that, insofar as the various advocates of the redemptive paradigm subscribed to variations on Weberian monism — i.e., rationalization constitutes the monolithic tendency in the modern world — they failed to appreciate this fundamental ambivalence and generally ended up, in one form or another, with an abstract negation of modernity.

From the other direction, all the thinkers I assigned to the non-redemptive camp have employed sufficiently differentiated scheme to conceptualize the ambivalence of modernity and formulate a defense of the "project of modernity." Thus, at different points in his career, Habermas has employed the dualistic schemes of practical vs. instrumental reason, social integration vs. system integration and life-world vs. system to conceptualize the basic tendencies as well as pathologies of modernity. Similarly, Castoriadis maintains that modernity is constituted by two heterogeneous and equally fundamental "imaginaries," namely, the project of (social and individual) autonomy and the project of the infinite expansion of pseudo-rational mastery. And Heller introduces a parallel but three-fold scheme of equally fundamental tendencies to characterize modernity: democratization, commodification, and industrialization. The intention of each of these thinkers is to defend, in their own way, the first term in the series — i.e. practical reason, the project of autonomy and democracy — against the improper expansion of the others; and each conceives of the pathologies of modernity precisely in terms of that expansion.[1] The program would be to defend the project of modernity *qua* the project of autonomy against its liquidation by the expansion of instrumental reason. What the desirable relation between the realm of autonomy and the realm of instrumental reason — e.g., between democratic decision making and bureaucratic administration — ought to be in a rational society is, however, a point of controversy among the various thinkers I have cited. But this is more a matter of detail that does not affect their fundamental agreement. I would like to use this notion of the ambivalence of modernity to elucidate disagreements with my critics. I shall try to show how each of their positions suffers because they failed to grasp this ambivalence adequately.

(1) *Gonzales*: As Gonzales' criticisms are the bluntest, they have the decided advantage of posing certain basic questions, e.g., revolution, head on. I shall

1. A related but not equivalent way of formulating the fundamental ambivalence of modernity concerns the concept of disenchantment. Once again, the theorists of redemption understand the disenchantment of the world in a monolithic sense, i.e., only as a loss of meaning. What they fail to calculate into their theory is the fact the process of disenchantment, at the same time as it constitutes a loss of meaning, also constitutes a process of disillusionment, which is to say, an advance in cognition. These two must be thought together. See Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. I: Reason and Rationalization of Society*, trans. T. McCarthy, (Boston, 1984), pp. 157 ff.

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therefore take them up first. We can ignore his *ad hominem* insinuations that I am an aging conformist academic, through which he attempts to deflect attention from the arguments, and turn to the substantive disagreements between us. It does not matter that Gonzales calls himself a neo-Adornian rather than a Redemptionist — the name is unimportant — for his position comes the closest to embodying the monistic logic I described in the redemptive paradigm. Indeed, he argues *both* that the commodity form has penetrated all realms of life to such an extent that the possible conditions for autonomy and democracy have *already* been destroyed, *and* that there is no Other outside the autochthonic totalizing system which might serve as an archimedean point for social transformation: "In fact, within *Telos* there are some who see the commodity form as penetrating all areas of human existence . . . but who also realize there is no radical Other outside each and everyone of us, and that this process of administrative encroachment in the life-world . . . undermines the very possibility of autonomous individuality thus ruling out any creative dimension . . . other than what falls within the logic of the cash-nexus and instrumental rationality resulting in the undermining of the very possibility of democracy in the glorified form Whitebook's liberal paradigm advocates." (*Telos* #65, p. 167)

In addition to the fact that this analysis is empirically inaccurate, it raises another more disturbing question: if there are no possibilities, either internal or external, for positive political action within the current totally administered society, why continue to write for a journal of "critical thought," except perhaps for the perverse existential pleasure of being lucid about the impossibility of our situation — and to do so without Adorno's dialectical finesse to boot! Gonzales is, to say the least, involved in a performative contradiction.

To make matters worse, while he decries the possibility of meaningful political action, he simultaneously speaks *as if* he possessed a defensible notion of what it would mean to be radical today when he denounces other positions for their conservatism, e.g., mine. Indeed, his denunciations simply do not make sense without the presupposition of a grounded notion of radicalism which could provide the standpoint for the critique. It is my contention, however, that we do not possess such a notion at present, and it was precisely a debate concerning its possible meaning that the "The Politics of Redemption" was meant to stimulate.

Thus, although Gonzales would be the first to admit the exhaustion of the traditional leftist discourse, his criticisms of my argument assume that the old framework is still intact. This is apparent in the following passage: "The very labels [Whitebook employs] . . . already present problems. Democratic vs. redemptive paradigms? What kind of Madison Avenue packaging of the issues is this? Years ago we would have simply spoken of "reformist" vs. "revolutionary," or "bourgeois" vs. "radical" outlooks. How did the old contraposition end up redefined in these terms? And what does it entail? . . . It is a linguistic trick meant to occlude the real conflict between what can be described in Whitebook's Madison Avenue style, as a tired conformist academic

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outlook and one that, notwithstanding the problems with attempts to generate the 'new man' during the 20th century, still regards the utopian dimension as politically essential and considers the search for qualitative change as the *sine qua non conditio* of critical thought. Whitebook is clearly at home within the logic of the given and all he seeks is its deliberate extension. This, however, is one of the simplest definitions of *conservatism.*"

There is much that must be said about the foregoing passage. What Gonzales refers to as a "linguistic trick" was exactly my attempt to problematize the old leftist vocabulary in the hopes of approaching the questions in a fresh manner. Gonzales, in contrast, seems to imply that the very fact that we said things in a certain way "years ago" guarantees their validity even today; this is not simply a definition of conservatism, but of traditionalism in the strictest sense. Take the oppposition of reform vs. revolution, for example. Gonzales is at least honest enough to raise the question of revolution directly, which my other critics, while evoking the pathos of the revolutionary tradition as part of the rhetoric of their arguments, are not. He assumes, however, that the concept of revolution is unproblematic and never specifies what it might mean in advanced capitalist societies where barricades and civil war are certainly out of the question, where our fallibilistic consciousness — as well as the lessons of history — ought to deprive us of the requisite *hubris* for undertaking a revolution of the traditional sort, and where the unintended consequences of attempts at holistic upheaval appear too incalculable to be risked under conditions of extreme complexity. This is not to say, however, that the critique of reformism is without merit: It may be that given power relations and structural arrangements within the society systemically preclude the solution of certain pressing problems, e.g., the ecology crisis, so that only a direct dissolution of those relations and a radical reorganization of the social order, which would confront power with power, would lead to a solution; a revolution cannot remain self-limiting forever. While I do not pretend to have immediate answers, it seems that only direct emersion in *aporias* of this sort can provide the point of departure for creative political thinking.[2]

Gonzales also accuses me of speaking euphemistically in referring to the market rather than to capitalism. But, once again, this involves another piece of received radical wisdom which must be seriously questioned: namely, whether all markets, because of their *chrematistic* nature, will necessarily expand into a totalizing capitalist system, or whether they can be constrained and subordinated to ethical political and cultural considerations — whether, in short, markets can be "renormatized." If the first situation were the case, then markets would have to be eliminated from an "emancipated" society; while if the second were true, limited markets could be incorporated into an

2. Similar things could be said about Gonzales' introduction of the opposition between "bourgeois" and "radical." What is the justification of introducing such an opposition when he adamantly rejects every possible candidate for an agent of radical change, the proletariat, the Third World, women, social movements, etc.?

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essentially non-capitalist society without the commodity form dominating all aspects of life. This is another fundamental question, the answer to which entails two radically different visions of emancipation.

Gonzales' central criticism is that I have given up the "search for qualitative change," which is "the *sine qua non conditio* of critical thought" and am "at home within the logic of the given and [seek] its deliberate extension." An answer to these charges obviously turns on what one means by "qualitive change" and "the logic of the given." And it is here where the absolute necessity of a dualistic framework that can encompass the ambivalent nature of modernity becomes most apparent. If the logic of the given means the logic of instrumental reason — which is one of the two equiprimordial logics of modernity — then I am certainly not for its extension, deliberate or otherwise. On the contrary, I advocate its radical attenuation and subordination to the other equally fundamental logic of the given, practical reason. If, however, by the logic of the given, Gonzales means the logic of autonomy, democracy and practical reason, I am certainly in favor its deliberate extension. Indeed, this is what a radical program ought to be today: the radicalization and fulfillment of the uncompleted project of modernity *qua* the project of autonomy as against the project of instrumentalization. Whether or not one considers this qualitative change is, in part, a matter of semantics. Insofar as the project of autonomy has been initiated — but certainly not fulfilled — in modernity, it does not, unlike the politics of redemption, require a total historical rupture in the sense envisioned by the old Frankfurt School. But insofar as the completion of the project of modernity *qua* the project of autonomy would require a social transformation of the most dramatic sort, it could certainly be considered a qualitative change.[3]

It might be useful in this context to introduce a distinction between two different notions of qualitative change, the redemptive and the utopian. Such a distinction could undercut the commonly encountered antinomy between an ungrounded ultra-leftism which necessarily results in either hibernation or

3. And again, in a similar vein, Gonzales objects to the use of the term "civil society," which he dismisses as nothing but a "bad ideological rendition of the old 'bourgeois society' " (p. 169). Unless one dismisses this as nothing but a product of German historical backwardness, the very ambiguity of the German term *bürgerlich* — which has connotations of both *bourgeois* and *citoyen* — could prove productive for the sort of discussion that ought to be occurring in *Telos*. While it is historically true, as Hegel observed, that the institutionalization of civil society — *qua* a realm where the right to subjective freedom was recognized for the first time in history — was linked to the emergence of market society, the important question for us is whether that link is a necessary or a contingent one. In other words, can the advances in subjective freedom which were indeed the true accomplishments of modernity be preserved independently of capitalism — which in the long run even serves to undermine the very subjective freedom it had helped to bring into existence in the first instance? See Reidel's classic article, "*Hegels Begriff der burgerlichen Gesellschaft und das Problem seines geschictlichen Ursprungs*," *Materialien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosohie*, Band 1, ed. Manfred Reidel (Frankfurt, 1975), pp. 247-248.

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terrorism, on the one hand, or the "joyless reformism" of traditional social democracy, on the other. The distinction between redemptionism and utopianism would turn on the question of *total rupture.* As has often been shown, the old Frankfurt's School's analysis of modernity — because it thoroughly underestimated the project of autonomy — resulted in a situation where the only solution to the crisis of modernity that could be imagined required a radical rupture in the continuum of history. Nothing short of the redemption of the totally fallen world would constitute an adequate solution. Once the two-fold scheme is introduced, however, it is possible to envision a completion of the project of autonomy which, while entailing a qualitative change in social reality, would not involve a *toto caelo* rupture in the continuum of history. Measured against the present historical reality such a change could perhaps be considered utopian.

Gonzales maintains, however, *and this is really the central point of contention between us*, that the project of modernity in this sense is in principle uncompletable: ". . . the incompleteness of modernity has no chance of being completed but tends to become increasingly incomplete and, ultimately, in principle unrealizable. What Whitebook dismisses as mere pathologies of modernity are, in fact, its very essence." (p. 168) Gonzales, asserts this because he subscribes to the essentially monistic position I identified with the politics of redemption. He identifies capitalism with modernity as such, and dismisses all seemingly non-capitalist or anti-capitalist elements as mere appearances which are generated by the consciousness industry to integrate the system functionally. He maintains that all elements of autonomous individuality have *already* been destroyed by the capitalist rationalization process which is now forced "to artificially reconstitute a minimal individuality to help regulate the whole administrative apparatus within a context where it is structurally ruled out." (*loc cit.*) Through a theory of socially generated systematic delusion, he extends the old theory of ideology to the point where it can no longer be coherently stated.

(2) *Breines.* Breines accuses Feher and me of exemplifying a "new harshness" in *Telos* which remains insensitive to the realities of human suffering and political struggle in the contemporary world, and rationalizes that insensitivity with a celebration of modernity: "The new spirit in *Telos* is not just rhetorically pluralist. It also includes a new coldness, a harshness and on occasion an unpleasant confident detachment from substantial areas of pain, resistance, despair and hope in contemporary America. At its mildest, this new spirit takes the form of the sort of enthusiastic appraisals of modernity (capitalist rather than Soviet modernity)[4] one finds in the Feher and Whitebook essays. The anguish that has always clung to its achievements, the pain that pervades modernity's progress, seem not to make it into the new ledger." (p. 157)

4. I would say that "Soviet modernity" is only half modern insofar as it has embraced the project of instrument reason while repressing the project of autonomy completely.

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In the first place, I did not think it necessary to document once again the destructiveness of capitalist development and the marked increase in suffering that has occurred under the Reagan era. That side of the ledger has been amply documented. What has been inadequately documented, however, owing in large part to our Weberian Marxist heritage, is the other side, that actual advances have occurred *side by side with* the destructiveness of capitalist development. And it is absolutely essential to possess a sufficient appreciation of those advances — and therewith of the fundamentally ambivalent nature of modernity — *precisely to formulate a critique of capitalism which could be trenchant and compelling today*: without such a critique we are left with young Hegelianism in the worst sense.

Which leads me to my second point: Because he refuses to undertake a serious reexamination of the leftist framework, Breines (and Gonzales for that matter), despite his condemnation of capitalism and rhetorical solidarity with the oppressed, cannot formulate a critique of capitalism effective in opposing it and thereby *really diminishing suffering*. If Feher's and my position suffer from a certain harshness, Breines' suffers from conceptual softness. After all that has happened on both sides of the political spectrum in the last twenty years — just for starters: Reagan and Thatcher, Neo-Fundamentalism, Solidarity, Campochia, The Sandinistas, staggering unemployment, Three Mile Island, French Socialism, Afghanistan, Iran, the transition to democracy in Spain, Brazil and Argentina, the virtual evaporation of the trade union movement, etc. — the repetition of (old or new) leftist verities is inadequate to the situation. These developments demand a major reevaluation of fundamental assumptions, a rethinking of what is going on as Hannah Arendt would put it. *Today conceptual laxity, regardless of one's admittedly good intentions, constitutes one of the major forms of political irresponsibility.*

Indeed, rather than resulting from an insensitivity towards the destructiveness of capitalist development, one of the central motives for introducing the sort of dualistic scheme I have been advocating is the formulation of an effective critique of analyzing capitalism, which is unavailable from within the redemptive paradigm. The full destructiveness of capitalist development can only be illuminated against the backdrop of the project of autonomy; it provides the normative yardstick with which to conduct the critique. The project of autonomy, moreover, provides a standpoint for critique which is to some degree anchored in the political community in which we live and which therefore transcends the standpoint of mere moral and aesthetic outrage. As Feher argued, the redemptive critique of capitalism — insofar as the status of its criticism of the soullessness of the bourgeois world is essentially aesthetic-existential rather than ethico-political — remains external and therefore ultimately ineffective. It does not appeal to public norms which, however dormant, are nevertheless sedimented within our socio-political order and could become the point of departure for political criticism. In the final analysis, the redemptive criticism of capitalism has the status of a *matter of taste* — it is *our* subjective opinion — and, as such, can only have elitist and/or terrorist con-

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sequences. Similarly, only an analysis of the improper intrusion of the project of instrumentalization into the project of autonomy, à la Habermas, can provide an adequate conceptualization of the pathologies of modernity and thereby provide some indication of potential sources of political action.

Rather than providing evidence against my position, several of the points Breines raises in fact illustrate my thesis concerning the equiprimordiality of the project of autonomy and the project of instrumentalization as the core constituents of modernity. To take one example, Breines accuses Feher and me of ignoring the case of Trotsky, which "suggests a large dimension of the whole issue . . . : namely, the relation between *modernity* and the homogenizing or totalitarian state." But this is precisely the point: the totalitarian state, with its drive toward total homogenization, represents the triumph of one constituent of modernity, the project of instrumentalization, over the other, the project of autonomy. The more important point is, however, that if modernity as such is identified with instrumental reason and the project of autonomy is ignored, then modernity is viewed as *intrinsically totalitarian*.[5] It is this sort of identification which lies behind the politics of redemption and instigates its search for the radical Other that could affect a holistic transfiguration of the modern world.

Although he does not elaborate it, Breines touches on a point which raises a most interesting question concerning my position. Since the struggle against absolutism and superstition no longer generate the same enthusiasm as in the heroic days of the Enlightenment, what will provide the affective or motivational basis for a politics of autonomy? More specifically, Breines points out that two of the most significant struggles for autonomy, the Civil Rights movement and Solidarity — which I agree are two of the exemplary political movements of the second half of the twentieth century — derived their affective content, in the large part, from the church; redemptive values motivated the struggle to institutionalize autonomy! Likewise, it is not clear how much motivational power the themes of democracy and autonomy can generate in countries where formal democracy has been established for some time and where in fact it is greeted with a certain cynicism as opposed to countries, where formal democracy is only now being attained, e.g., the Philippines.

Once again, only a theory of the pathologies of modernity resulting from the colonization of the life world can provide us with some indication of the motivational basis for socio-political action today. The so-called new social movements — which Breines defends and Gonzales dismisses as ephemeral — in the advanced societies constitute the single most compelling example of this fact. These movements represent the point at which the contradictions of the system enter into the daily lives and consciousness of individuals. To be sure, these movements have not assumed the form of traditional political movements. But, as many observers have pointed out, it would be wrong to expect this. Given the pluralistic, *lebensweltliche* issues which move them, it

5. This specter not only haunted the work of the early Frankfurt School but can also be observed in Foucault's theory of the modern subject.

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would be wrong to expect the new social movements to assume the unified totalizing characteristics of, for example, the workers movement. And, indeed, if it does not lead to privitization, this might constitute one of their more attractive features. However ambiguous they may be, social movements offer the most promising point of departure for a politics of radical democracy today.

(3) *Wolin*. Wolin's response, which attempts to dissolve the opposition between redemption and *Mündigkeit* as an abstract antinomy, is certainly the most thoughtful of the three. He argues that, as "a prisoner of [my] own sobriety" (p. 161), I fail to appreciate the fact that redemption and enlightenment have historically gone together, e.g., the "messianic zeal" with which the *philosophes* attacked the *ancien regime*: "It is precisely this redemptive impulse, their utopian longing, that provided [the *philosophes*] with the stores of motivational conviction necessary to launch the assault on the *ancien regime*. One cannot have it both ways: Enlightenment sobriety without revolutionary zealotry." (p. 160) This is, of course, similar to the question I addressed in my response to Breines, namely, where could the "motivational conviction," to use Wolin's apt phrase, for a politics of autonomy come from today?

Wolin argues that Benjamin, through his investigation of traditional forms of life, was able to illuminate the deficiencies of modernity and extract norms for critique much better than I, since my approach remains immanent to the modern form of *Sittlichkeit*. The question can be raised, however, Why it is necessary to turn only to traditional forms of life to locate these norms? Let us not forget that the project of autonomy and democracy constitutes a tradition (a somewhat peculiar one, to be sure) — *indeed our own tradition* — which is itself in danger of becoming destroyed by instrumentalization and requires defense *qua* reinterpretation. Thus, in addition to the recollection of precapitalist traditions as source for critique, we have our own tradition as a sedimented storehouse of meanings and norms which can be reinterpreted and reanimated.

Wolin comes perilously close to Gonzales in his evaluation of the normative potential of modernity. He maintains that "the counterfactual status of bourgeois ideals grows more tenuous by the hour" (p. 161) and that bourgeois consciousness is indeed on the verge of total cynicism: "As we move further away from the historical triumph of bourgeois societies toward an increasingly defensive, conservative phase, their normative origins are more and more relegated to a quaint, primeval past — perhaps an interesting object of study for classes in the history of political philosophy, but with little bearing on the immediate historical present." (p. 162) What if this were in fact true? What would follow? Would leftists have a better chance of communicating with the American people, during this appallingly conservative period, by employing the vocabulary of redemption? I doubt it. Furthermore, the reinterpretation of democracy is not simply an "interesting object of study for classes in the history of political philosophy . . . with little bearing on the immediate historical present." On the contrary, there is in fact presently a debate occurring on

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democracy, both here and abroad, which is far too important to leave to the neo-liberals and neo-conservatives. We should be combating them for the very meaning of the term.

In this context, Wolin makes the following remark — reminiscent of Kundera's claim that certain Central Europeans are more concerned with the preservation of Western European culture than the Western Europeans — which I would not dismiss as lightly as he: "These observations suggest an ironic scenario whereby critics of bourgeois life take its outmoded values more seriously than the bourgeoisie itself." (p. 162) Ironical or not, I view the resuscitation and radicalization of failing "bourgeois" norms, in order to employ them for the critique of bourgeois society, as an admirable program for leftists during this period. Why is it valid to be the guardians of memory against historical amnesia with respect to precapitalist traditions — to engage in the Benjaminian remembrance of lost esoteric traditions — and not with respect to our own? I suspect because of the habitual leftist equation of our tradition with capitalism and its consequential wholesale rejection — truth must be in the margins.

I would like to raise one point concerning the compatibility of redemptive ideals with democracy. Wolin sees no difficulty with their compatibility and indeed believes they are necessary complements of one another. Redemptive ideas are, according to him, necessary both to illuminate the negativity of the present and to act as regulative ideals to inform any future democratic society. Indeed, he reminds me that even Kant — *the* philosopher of *Mündigkeit* — realized that "our reason is uncontrollably driven beyond the limitations of the 'bounds of sense' in the direction of supersensible employment.The desire to know the unconditioned, to bring to bear the state of perfection embodied therein upon the indigence of the human condition, has been a constant inspiration of all utopian political longing." (p. 162) But it is precisely the Kantian construction — which Habermas has in some sense taken over with the ideal speech situation — between a realm of regulative ideas, which is governed by the logic of the infinite and which can never be attained but only asymptotically approached, on the one hand, and a realm of empirical ideas, governed by the logic of the finite, on the other, that I question.

Kant, as we know, projected a realm of regulative ideas beyond the valid employment of our understanding. At the same time as we are forced to posit these ideas "by the nature of reason itself," the attempt to realize them directly in the realm of historico-empirical reality involves us in hopeless contradictions. The important point is that these regulative ideas are all ideas of finality, totality and completion which are unattainable by the finite mind. In a similar vein, Kant reasoned by analogy from the image of a divine intelligence — of an *intellectus arctypicus* which was not burdened by empirical existence and finitude in its functioning — to the finite mind in order to comprehend the legitimate employment of the latter; the finite mind, in other words, was conceptualized on analogy with the infinite, and not, strictly speaking, in its own terms. This philosophical construction, which must have recourse to the

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infinite in order to reason about the finite, shows the extent to which Kant's philosophy, no matter how secular its intentions, was wedded to theological forms of thought.

It should also be pointed out, moreover, that the movement from Kant to Marx can be interpreted as a progressive "de-transcendentalization" of these regulative ideas. Which is to say, whereas with Kant these finalistic ideals are to remain thoroughly transcendental, with Hegel they assume an ambiguous middle ground somewhere between the transcendental and the empirical, and finally with Marx they become legitimate goals to be attained in the real world, e.g., the end of history and the realm of freedom. One does not have to become a *nouveau philosophe* to appreciate the dangers — about which Kant evinced a strong intuition — of this de-transcendentalization; while it may not lead with metaphysical necessity to the Gulag, its political implications can be treacherous indeed, as already Hegel realized in the *Phenomenology*.

However, in addition to the danger that their "de-transcendentalization" undoubtedly poses, I would like to raise another, more skeptical question concerning the nature of those regulative ideas. Given the political experience of this century, we are today more inclined to cherish the values of finitude itself — of dissent, argumentation, plurality, etc. — rather than those of closure, completion, and ultimate reconciliation. *We are more inclined, in other words, to be suspicious of the ultimately harmonistic presuppositions which worked their way into the Marxian tradition through the "de-transcendentalization" of the Kantian regulative ideas*. Arendt, for example, maintained that the Greeks, perhaps the most political people ever, were also the most argumentative; likewise, in her critique of Marx, she argued that where metaphysical certainty enters, politics ends precisely because metaphysics precludes authentic deliberation. Similarly, Lyotard questions the norm of consensus for a society, maintaining that what is desirable in a free society is not consensus, but, on the contrary, dissent.[6] The question becomes then, what are we to make of the regulative ideas which embody the very values of completeness, totality, and finality that we would not longer even want to realize? It is no longer the case, in other words, that these regulative ideas are desirable but only asymptotically approachable and ultimately unattainable. Their very desirability itself has been called into question.[7]

While my polemics against theology and my defense of the Enlightenment

6. While Lyotard is certainly correct in the first instance, his position remains abstract because he fails to address an important question concerning the relation between consensus and dissent: namely, what sort of *minimal* consensus would be required in order to have a society that not only tolerated but valued dissent, plurality of lifeforms, difference, etc. Lyotard is so counter-phobic about the potentially authoritarian or terrorist implications of consensus he never questions the conditions of the possibility of dissent itself. What we are left with is the danger from the other direction, i.e., everything-goes-frivolity in which the respect for difference as an ethico-political *achievement* would undoubtedly be lost.

7. Wellmer called my attention to this question.

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in the "Politics of Redemption"[8] may have appeared anachronistic, their theoretical motives, I hope, will now have begun to become clear. My thesis is that there is an intrinsic connection between the modern finite standpoint and the democratic one. Only after the decentering of modern consciousness — in which the finitude and perspectivity of our own individual and social position has been thoroughly internalized — can an authentically democratic standpoint be achieved. For only then has the learning process proceeded to the point where it is realized that no particular standpoint, including one's own, can be absolutized; the differences between standpoints must be adjudicated through rational discussion. This is the meaning of democracy at its deepest psychological and philosophical level. Thus, while there is a long venerable tradition, to which Wolin refers, that has appropriated and secularized the redemptive content of certain religious traditions and employed them for politically radical ends, it is necessary to adopt a more critical stance toward that tradition. However appealing the vision itself may appear, as long as it is still structured by absolutist presuppositions, its compatibility with democracy must remain doubtful.

8. See also my contribution to the "Symposium on Religion and Politics," *Telos* (58), Winter 1983-4, pp. 152-156.

Against the Post-Marxist Pseudo-Left

Moishe Gonzales

The main feature of Whitebook's reply is that he does not give an inch and, more convinced than ever, keeps charging the windmills of redemption and revolution with the same lame theoretical weapons he had previously deployed. Only this time, he seeks reinforcements by appealing to the "heavies": Habermas, Castoriadis and Heller. Since multiplying zero by any figure still yields zero, no substantive progress has been made. It would be futile to reiterate the same objections once again. Rather, to move the debate beyond dead center it may be helpful to pose new questions, e.g., in terms of the status of the concepts employed and the political consequences they entail.

Thus, the concept of modernity had always been, in all its various formulations, an extremely sloppy one, which cannot be made any more attractive by Whitebook's emphasis on its "fundamental ambiguity." It is not imme-

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diately obvious why ambiguous sloppiness should be preferable to non-ambiguous sloppiness. As a theoretical construct *constitutive* of social reality, "modernity" can only be judged by its ability to yield analytical insights or, more directly, by its political implications. To use the old positivists' way of posing the question: it is neither an empirical generalization nor a logical necessity. Especially in its ambiguous version, it means everything and nothing. This, for Whitebook and his learned authorities, is a means to split capitalism and democracy so to conveniently glorify one and damn the other. That democracy may be a political epiphenomenon of capitalism is ruled out from consideration by the very way of posing the question. In fact, even raising the issue in the present context of fashionable academic discourse is to incur instant damnation by a self-righteous post-Marxist pseudo-Left absorbed in rediscovering the wheel of liberalism.

This hyper-polemical tone, however, is futile. It only leads to a recycling of old worn-out arguments which, if they have not been convincing so far, will not fare any better if merely restated. Rather, it is more productive to ask who is really asking for democracy today in the West and why, i.e., what is the *Realpolitik* flowing out of this esoteric theoretical discussion?

Undoubtedly, democracy is a crucial issue in Soviet-type societies where it is systematicaly denied, or under the various right-wing dictatorships where it is allegedly only "temporarily" suspended. But in the U.S. the issue is essential only to a few intellectuals and bureaucrats for reasons which should become clear fairly soon. Which social groups would otherwise benefit from considerable infusions of democracy?

Certainly not the ghetto dwellers who are presently unable to grasp what the real issues are and, even if they could, it is extremely unlikely they would take the time that it takes to make sense out of them, to form a politically viable opinion, and to act on it. Without eternalizing Michel's iron law of oligarchy, it is clear that further democratization of the ghetto will either result in short-sighted counterproductive measures (e.g., community control of schools), or the creation of powerful but centrally controlled and highly bureaucratic political machines.

The working class would also not be too excited by the prospect since its main concerns, well remunerated employment and job security, cannot be automatically secured by democratic means. Of course, it is in principle possible to vote capitalism out of existence. But without capitalism, democracy does not seem to fare too well and, at any rate, the bureaucrat has historically proven to be neither more efficient nor in the long run more democratic than the capitalist. No: the working class would neither immediately benefit nor consequently be interested in much more democracy than it already has, unless one can show concretely that it did have a direct impact on working people.

As for the middle classes, they seem to have as much democracy as they need. Given the present disintegration of the two major parties, it only takes moderate efforts to organize locally for immediate projects, and it is not the

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case that national decision-making is sharply cut off from grass-roots public opinion. It is unclear how increased democratiziation could benefit either the "yuppies" or the suburbanites who are already too strapped for time to stay abreast of the minimal dosages of information pre-packaged for quick consumption by the mass media.

The capitalists, the executives, or what has been referred to as the "state bourgeoisie" are understandably not too interested in further democratization which, from their viewpoint, translates into interference, inefficiency and unfreedom. In fact, as they see it, the only real democracy is related to their ability to make decisions and benefit or suffer from their consequences, which translates into eliminating restrictions and cumbersome regulations and efficiently guaranteeing the enforcement of contracts. All else becomes a matter of peripheral remedial intervention to keep the system running smoothly.

It is the intellectuals and the bureaucrats who have a direct interest in "more democracy" and who, because of their social marginality and universally perceived parasitic character, can only articulate it by projecting it on an otherwise indifferent and uninterested broader society. Since intellectuals deal with ideas and language, it is essential for improving their social position to hypostatize this "cultural capital" to a level at least comparable to that of real capital. Representation, politics and discourse thus become privileged domains whose inflated importance guarantees the primacy of intellectuals and a valorization of their otherwise unwanted cultural skills. The call for democracy — the more the better — becomes, in a Western capitalist society, an intellectual's slogan: self-advertisement for the fulfillment of artificial needs satisfiable only by merchants of theories and utopias. There is nothing really democratic about the present call for "more democracy." It is well known that more democracy always means *much* more bureaucracy. The collective will can only manage by means of a large staff of well-trained professionals. Thus, the ideology of ever-more democracy is the expression of entrenched bureaucrats who, unfortunately, are not theoretically sophisticated enough to make the connection and effectively articulate their objective interests. Konrad and Szelenyi had something of the kind in mind when they identified, at least in terms of the Eastern European experience, the objective interests of intellectuals and bureaucrats. And, again, the ideological package can only be marketed not as a *particularistic Weltanschauung*, but as the articulation of the general interest — an operation not too different from the Madison Avenue promotion of any pedestrian commodity in need of a mass buying public.

It is democracy, rather than modernity, that is fundamentally ambiguous — so much that its particularistic character as the ideology of bureaucrats and intellectuals is readily confused with another concept Whitebook occludes: *autonomy*. The ideal of self-determining individuality is a radical concept, but not an altogether recent one. It is rooted in the very structure of Western civilization and articulated in the traditional versions of the Chris-

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tian soul or the creative artist, or the productive worker. To the extent that it is an universally shared assumption, it is all too easy to appeal to it and identify it with otherwise incompatible particularistic interests of bureaucrats and intellectuals. What is fraudulent about this identification is that its latent objective is ultimately highly undemocratic and conducive primarily to new and more sophisticated relations of dominations precluding precisely that which autonomy previously advocated.

The call for more democracy in a socio-economic context that systematically undermines (through consumerism, bureaucracy, the culture industry, etc.) that autonomy necessary to sustain it without the prior focusing on the constitution of concrete individuality, is either theoretically disingenuous or politically dishonest — or both. To further dissociate this same democracy from that capitalism of which is it the political otherness is to confuse the issue beyond any possible redemption.

Without having to inquire into when democracy has ever thrived independently of capitalism and private property, one need only ask, naively, why the post-Marxist pseudo-Left despises capitalism so much — or any longer, after the desertion of Marxism. What made "exploitation," the moral Achilles' heel of capitalism, such a powerful source of theoretical wrath, was the coercive unequal exchange that it presupposed. It was, and still is, simply unacceptable that one individual or organization should remunerate another individual for less that what the latter earned, under conditions of coercion. But, does anyone know anymore, or ever did, what "equal exchange" is? Does anyone accept the labor theory of value according to which all labor is seen as homogenous and interchangeable — probably the most self-evident example imaginable of what Adorno meant by identity theory? Of course, its functional equivalent periodically resurfaces under slick new labels, such as "comparable worth." The impossibility to define, measure, or otherwise conceptualize what this would be other than in the most trivial and pedestrian cases exposes it for what it actually is: another particularistic effort to undermine the more universally solid determination reached through independent market mechanisms.

But if market mechanisms do a better job than bureaucratic procedures or political conpromises, then the question of democracy is really one of guaranteeing the efficient functioning of these market mechanisms without unwarrantedly severing economics and politics — an old positivist trick that could never be practically or theoretically defended. Politics itself becomes a form of economic activity. But if politics and economics are no longer split, then the alleged ambiguity of modernity also vanishes, revealing unchanged the old "bourgeois order" that it originally was meant to make more palatable and less particularist. Furthermore, capitalism loses its transitory and immoral character enthymematically contraposed to a just socialism now demystified as the ideology of a parasitic bureaucracy, and the emphasis shifts. The emancipatory program now has nothing to do with a call for more democracy, but with the conditions conducive to an autonomous

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individuality without which democracy is an empty shell able to contain all types of new and more sophisticated relations of domination. The focus should thus shift away from political theory and communication theory — the principal domain of bureaucrats and intellectuals — back to *social* theory understood as the logic of social dynamics and the realization of the universalist *telos* of Western civilization: the constitution of a society of free autonomous individuals.

The problem has not been one of redemption and revolution, as Whitebook thinks, other than for a long gone generation of eschatological visionaries and Bolsheviks, but one of understanding the historicity of the present unencumbered by the long gone battles of older generations. To fight the redemption and the Bolshevism of an early Lukács or a Benjamin with the theoretical tools of an Habermas, a Heller or a Castoriadis is to miss the present in favor of academic nostalgia. It is a pre-1968 confrontation rendered obsolete by the age of post-imperialism and neo-conservatism. Whitebook is right in one thing: these may have been *Telos*' concerns once. Today, the debate between the Marxists of the early 1920's and the post-Marxists of the 1970's has become stale. The action is elsewhere.

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Reviews

James O'Connor, *Accumulation Crisis* (New York: Blackwell, 1984)

Reading James O'Connor's *Accumulation Crisis* is very confusing. At certain junctures, it reads like the "sequel" to *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*, elaborating the expanding of his 1973 critique of modern macroeconomic management as a spoils system of special interests. At other turns, it comes across as a "prequel" to the earlier work, outlining a tortuous logic for the underproduction and accumulation crises that set off the "fiscal crises" he described over a decade earlier. Although not all that new, the plot of the sequel is occasionally interesting. The prequel side of the narrative, however, is very questionable and as old as the hills because, once again, the ancient apparatus of theories of surplus value is trundled out and fired up to "explain" the roots of the current crisis.

Not many works produced on the high deserts of Marxian political economy ever garnered as much attention as *The Fiscal Crisis of the State.*[1] Yet, immediately after its publication in 1973, this book was enthusiastically imported into corporate board rooms, government bureaus, and academic lecture halls all across the nation. By accident or design, O'Connor seemed to have produced a veritable Michelin guide to the various economic and political crises of the 1970s. He argued that the capitalist state had to fulfill two often mutually contradictory functions: accumulation and legitimization.[2] While trying to foster conditions for profitable capital accumulation, it also had to generate social harmony through cooperation and/or coercion. The fiscal crisis erupted in the 1960s and 1970s, he asserted, because the state was socializing more and more of the costs in capital accumulation, while, at the same time, continuing the private appropriation of profits.

These policies produced a "structural gap" between state expenditures and state revenues in which the levels of spending outstrip the rates of revenue collection. The political processes of liberal democracies, moreover, exacerbated the crisis by permitting the private appropriation of state power to serve parochial political agendas as "special interests" make claims on the budget, tax codes or monetary policy. Ultimately, the fiscal crisis boils down to a situation of growing gridlock, where "the accumulation of social capital and social expenses is a highly irrational process from the standpoint of administrative coherence, fiscal stability, and potentially profitable private capital accumula-

1. James O'Connor, *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973).

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-10.

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tion" that can impair "the fiscal capacity of the system and potentially threaten the capacity of the system to produce surplus."[3]

The political by-products of the capitalist state's fiscal crisis turn up in tax increases, inflation, budgetary deficits, public employee strikes, welfare cutbacks, and taxpayer revolts. Thus, in 1973, O'Connor saw a promising political alliance to be formed between state workers and state clients, who both would be radicalized by the state's respective reduction of their wages and welfare benefits under pressure from the taxpayers and business interests. While these coalitions have yet to be forged, O'Connor's arguments in *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* clearly set the stage for his new book, which picks up at that spot that the former study abruptly ended with a quip from Kwame Toure (a.k.a. Stokely Carmichael), claiming that "individualism is a luxury that we can no longer afford" in the era of fiscal crisis. O'Connor then predicted in 1973 that these crises would continue until the nature of "social investment and social consumption and individual consumption and individualist modes of life are redefined."[4]

To a certain extent, O'Connor's challenge was taken up during the 1970s and early 1980s. However, it was Howard Jarvis, David Stockman, George Gilder and Ronald Reagan who put their talents to the redefinition of social investment, collective consumption and individualism, rather than the more progressive forces of youth, liberal professionals, social-industrial capitalists, and the working poor that O'Connor endorsed in 1973. Consequently, *Accumulation Crisis* is a renewed attempt to extend and refine his critiques, which he first made in *The Fiscal Crisis*, for the 1980s. O'Connor takes on the growing crisis of individualism as his new theme: "the argument developed in this study is that American individualism became self-contradictory and outlived its usefulness as a source of economic and social integration. In the regime of consumer capitalism, individualist ideologies became very expensive economically. In the 'culture of narcissism' individualism became costly socially and psychologically. In the interest-group liberal state, individualism became a political extravagance. These theses were, in fact, indirectly acknowledged by many commentators on contemporary American society, e.g., those who call for lower living standards; new forms of labor-management partnership or an America-style corporatism; new corporate cultures in which individuals are taught to accept corporate values and goals and in this way find meaning in an otherwise meaningless life; and revitalized plans to socialize social and economic reproduction processes with the aim of cheapening the costs of wages, salaries, and welfare" (p. 4). Yet, the reception of such critical ideas under Reagan has been less enthusiastic than it was under Nixon. Perhaps it is the times or maybe it is the argument, but O'Connor's latest work so far has fallen on deaf ears.

In plunging into this tangle of problems, O'Connor also sees himself cut-

3. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 256.

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ting a new theoretical path of analysis between the two analytical "deadends" of nineteenth century orthodox Marxism and early twentieth century Frankfurt School theory. Orthodox Marxist theory has developed into a rigid economic "systems theory," defaulted by its deterministic laws of falling rates of profit that cannot account for today's mixed capitalism with its cultural-ideological mode of reproduction. Similarly, Frankfurt School theorists, and their fellow travellers ranging from neo-Marxism to critical theory to Freudian Marxism, remain trapped in "one-dimensional" explanations of the class struggle. Their airtight case against the proletariat's consumerist cooperation forecloses almost any opportunity for creating real historical change out of the worker's current domination. Therefore, O'Connor's new path begins with "worker autonomy" theories, which focus on the interrelations "between the workers' struggles in all spheres of life and capital valorization and economic crisis tendencies" (p. 7).

To make these arguments stick, O'Connor does move beyond crisis theories grounded in the intrinsic logic of capital into theories of the crisis tied to the workers' struggles for autonomy and material benefits.[5] "The formal logic of crisis theory," O'Connor claims, "needs to be 'packed' or 'weighted' with the real historical development of the working class/salariat, class struggle, and political development, including the development of the dominant ideology" (p. 57). Accordingly, he believes that the proletariat rather than the bourgeoisie becomes the driving force in historical transformation: "the working class moved itself into the center of Western capitalist history. The claim is that the recomposition of capital, the working class (and salariat), and the state through historical economic crises and traditional class struggles revolutionized the conditions of social and economic reproduction not only within the production process but also within society and the state generally. The thesis is that these new conditions of reproduction and conditions of capitalist accumulation became increasingly incompatible. The basic reason, which we have made the focus of this work, was the development of ideologies of individualism and their practices, which flourished in the USA in proportion that the expansion of the division of social and industrial labor abolished traditional 'individuality' " (p. 8).

Essentially, O'Connor argues that the modern class struggle reverses the poles of opposition found in early capitalist development. Historically, workers used more individual means to defend local interests and ends against the universalizing forces of capital. Today, workers use more universal, collective means to advance individual ends. Ironically, then, the ideologies of individualism so rife in the United States, which seemed central to dominating and integrating the working class, actually are subverting the logic of capitalist integration and domination: "to the extent that individualism ideologies

5. See Michael Burowoy, *The Politics of Production: Factory Regimes Under Capitalism and Socialism* (London: Verso, 1985) for an example of these "workers' autonomy" theories.

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divided the working class, they legitimated class struggle in the form of the struggle for 'more' and for the 'self.' Class struggle in the 'individual' and 'pluralist' forms was possible precisely because these forms made it appear that class struggle did not even exist" (p. 8).

The cunning behind these ruses of reason is truly phenomenal. In the grand tradition of Marxist conceptual contortionism, O'Connor turns Lenin on his head. Every worker trapped in selfish trade-unionist consciousness is, in fact, advancing the cause of class struggle. The worker-in-himself is creating the class-for-itself, because proletarian self-seeking entails "an increase in the costs of reproducing the working class and salariat and increased inflexibilities in utilizing labor-power from the standpoint of capital. More specifically, the average consumption basket became too big, and its value content too high; the social consumption basket became too great, and its 'value content' likewise; class struggle in the individual form within and against the law of value interfered with capitalist processes whereby labor-power as produced and reproduced as variable capital . . . the structural gaps between conditions of social domination/integration and economic system domination/integration in this way became so many limits on capitalist accumulation" (pp. 8-9).

These claims outline the longer historical narratives that O'Connor spins off to support his case. In tagging individualism as the *primum mobile* of the accumulation crisis, however, he argues in favor of its sublimation through the struggle for new forms of "social individuality" to save the world-system from "individualist escapism" and "nuclear barbarism." Individualistic escapism is merely a form of bad consciousness that seeks false, individual accommodation within petty criminality, nationalism, narcissism, or survivalism. "All of these ideologies are merely so many ways of making capital's domination of labor more opaque, as well as covering up the failure of other ideologies of individualism in work, consumption and political life" (p. 22). Instead, O'Connor claims that progressive forces must create a new social individuality, deriving from "the mastery of the relationship between human history and nature, the reorganization of labor as a productive force and production relationship which requires political means and political objective, collective goals as well as collective means to goals, social needs defined in terms of the need for definite social relationships — these remain the social property of those for whom individualism has become a luxury which they can no longer afford economically, socially and psychologically: those struggling within feminist socialism, environmental socialism, democratic socialism, international socialism" (p. 23).

These happy trails into progressive social change, as O'Connor admits, are not the only solutions to the crisis of individualism. He acknowledges that new definitions of individualism have been under development under Carter and Reagan to resolve these dilemmas. To cope with the revolution of rising entitlements, O'Connor recounts how the "American establishment" came up in the 1970s with what might be called "the fours neos": neo-liberalism,

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neo-conservatism, neo-individualism, and neo-imperialism. Basically, neo-liberalism holds that the 1970s economic crisis was "a crisis of individual incentives, savings, and work discipline attributable to excessive government intervention in the economy," while neo-conservatism saw the social crisis as "a crisis of morals: the family, religious and patriotic sentiment, and traditional authority need refurbishing" (pp. 233-234). Both crises were traced back to excessive government intervention; therefore, as Reagan promised, "government would taken off people's backs." Yet, O'Connor observes that these two forces are actually highly contradictory. To the degree that neo-liberalism works, neo-conservatism will not, and the reverse is also true.

What ties these two contradictory forces together, then, is neo-individualism and neo-imperialism. The "revival of ideas of traditional individuality . . . self-help based on economic and social autonomy; voluntary associations of property owners' and anti-statism," or *neo-individualism*, and the rebirth of ideas of "traditional national power . . . continental and overseas expansionism, racism, and the idea that Americans were God's chosen people," or *neo-imperalism*, both enable the ruling elites to cushion the effects of dealing with the crisis among the larger population (p. 237). On the one hand, the costs of neo-liberalism could be off-loaded on the ramps of personal neo-individualism as the benefits of self-reliance. Likewise, the costs of neo-conservatism could be chalked up to the unceasing need to be united and vigilent against the red menace in neo-imperial escapades, like Grenada, Lebanon, Libya, Afghanistan or Nicaragua.

Yet, like most Americans below the $100,000 plus income levels, O'Connor sees Reaganism failing to work ideologically or economically. Neo-individualist self-reliance in the 1980s so far has meant more mayors and governors making trips to Japan to woo new factories and jobs into their depressed home economies. And, neo-imperalism largely has turned out to be *Rambo*, recommissioning WW II battleships, *contra* chic, and periodic dust-offs of Libya. Given these grim realities, O'Connor maintains that the two roads out of this current dilemma are statism/corporatism through strategies of re-industrialization or workers' democracy through the localism/populism of new social movements.

Unfortunately, these may be simply two sides of the same coin. O'Connor fails to see how localism/populism, at least, in the U.S., ties back directly into the neo-individualism he claims is failing. Corporate capitalism and the state will gladly subsidize and support local-populist initiatives to the extent that it gets them off the spot and leaves individual communities feeling "self-reliant." Replacing the expensive overhead of the welfare state with local-populist food banks, free clinics, shelters for the homeless, and municipal economic development offices is the kind of self-reliance that the monopoly sector and the national government like to see. And, as he admits himself, "populist models transposed to the level of national politics presuppose an active, democratic state administration, bottom-up collective decision-making, and individual responsibility to carry out these decisions in ways which sharpen the distinc-

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tion between civil society and state" (p. 248).

All of this sounds quite good. Yet, after fifty years of state intervention, entitlement politics, and narcissistic individualism, one wonders where these individuals and communities will be found. O'Connor presupposes that the cure already exists for these tough diseases in the body politic. Such people simply are not to be found in great numbers anywhere. The new social movements, as he believes, are not the workers' vanguard nor are their ranks full of these active, responsible, democratic individuals. On the whole, these new movements tend to be either cultural resistance groups, or they are single-issue pressure groups, pushing the existing regime to conduct its affairs in a somewhat more rational fashion. In tagging the new social movements as the latest incarnation of the collective subject-object, O'Connor simply fails to grasp how correct his interpretation of the last five or six decades really is.

The other problem with this analysis is its mechanical simplicity. His orthodox concepts are always at loggerheads with events. The theory of surplus value, it is assumed, proves how capital is created, valorized, circulated, reproduced. Therefore, by damn, we will make it "explain" everything — no matter how tortuous or counter-intuitive it seems. There is no confusion, no slippage, no mystery. Contemporary political reality can be all sliced up, picked apart, and slapped together again with complete clarity. The big glitch, of course, is that it does not hold together, and it is quite unconvincing. It is merely one handle welded across a dense mass that does not provide as much leverage on reality as O'Connor believes. Throughout the book, for example, O'Connor portrays the divergent struggles of diverse, multi-class based, new social movements as the *working class* "independently reorganizing social life: in new determinant forms of the modern class struggle" (p. 106). This position flies in the face of the facts, but he is forced into these conceptual corners by assuming that all progressive change comes *ipso facto* from the confrontations of labor versus capital.

Finally, O'Connor's key thesis is not very novel. From the mid-eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, capitalism is portrayed as destroying the traditional individuality of artisans and petty producers as the modern world-system developed. While it is not as new or provocative as he claims, O'Connor then asserts that capitalist accumulation also "created the basis for the development of modern *ideologies* of individualism, especially in the U.S., where . . . individualism was and remains the defining national ethic and also . . . the form in which the modern class struggle appears and an important source of modern economic and social crisis" (p. 5). These claims strongly echo the central themes of the "artificial negativity" thesis, which now is nearing its tenth birthday.[6] In fact, the prequel side of the book seems

6. See Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of One-Dimensionality," *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978) pp. 32-54; and, Tim Luke, "Culture and Politics in The Age of Artificial Negativity," *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978), pp. 55-73.

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to insert several artificial negativity premises into the "fiscal crisis" jig-saw puzzle, making the "accumulation crisis" narrative more complete. In the end, O'Connor's critique provides a useful *tour d'horizon* of orthodox Marxist and neo-Marxist commentary on political trends during the past twenty years, even though the picture reveals a theoretical Death Valley on the American left. The book guides us to a few promising theoretical springs, but, in the end, O'Connor's maps to the next reliable watering hole lead out into a mirage.

Tim Luke

Antonio Negri, *Marx beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*, translated by Harry Cleaver, Michael Ryan and Maurizio Viano; edited by Jim Fleming. (Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc.: South Headly, Mass., 1984), 236pp. + xxxiv. $25.95.

What is one to do with a work whose modest opening lines by the editor proclaim it to be "one of the most crucial documents in European Marxism since . . . well, since maybe ever"? Almost as if to reinforce this claim, the book comes padded with no fewer than three introductions, three prefaces, and a long epilogue. This alone should alert the unaware reader that the impenetrability of the text is due not to any conceptual profundity — as epigones would have it — but to an unimaginable theoretical confusion. The publisher's PR frontwoman seeks to market Negri as a "Eurocommunist theoretician" jailed for his explosive revolutionary views. The truth is, however, that Negri has nothing to do with Eurocommunism. For Eurocommunism as a failed Communist Party strategy, Negri has only the greatest disdain. This courtesy, of course, is reciprocated by most Eurocommunists. In face, some of the more malicious Eurocommunist analysts have insinuated that the function of Negri's group *Autonomia* and of other similar ultra-Left sects suspected of terrorism was to sabotage Eurocommunism by assassinating Aldo Moro, the Christian Democratic leader, at a time when a coalition government with the Italian Communist Party seemed imminent. By ruling out such a possibility the terrorists presumably only succeeded in objectively advancing the interests of the USSR who would have risked losing political hegemony over Western European Communist Parties had the project succeeded. At any rate, had Negri's name not been, rightly or wrongly, associated with terrorism, thus catching the attention of the academic "radical chic," these few scattered notes pretending to pass for a book would never have been published in any language — least of all English.

The text consists of nine lectures Negri delivered at the École Normale

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Supérieure in the Spring of 1978 at the invitation of Louis Althusser — at that time still flying high within the politicized clouds of French higher education. Why was an official card-carrying Stalinist apologist so kind to a leading *gauchiste* whose most vituperative attacks had always been directed against precisely the kind of organization he euphemistically refers to as "the orthodoxy"? Historically, the courtesy real no-nonsense communists have usually extended to their critical comrades on the Left has been accompanied by bullets and ice-picks. Why now this sudden kindness? Could it have had anything to do with the by then largely completed effort of rapidly re-Stalinizing Communist Parties such as the French to reintegrate within their ranks the organizational ruins of a bankrupt ultra-Left? Negri's rhetorical smokescreen of anti-Communist Party rhetoric may indeed hide a rather different *Realpolitik:* a recognition of the general irrelevance of *Autonomia* and of similar ultra-Left organizations except as potential unwitting tools in the attempt of Soviet foreign policy to bring back into line recalcitrant Western European Communist Parties.

Beyond this meager counterproductive political meaning, *Marx Beyond Marx* is a long-winded exercise in speculative Marxology. Harry Cleaver, one of the translators, is worried that this "new and exciting weapon" in the class struggle "will be limited to academic Marxists" (p. xix) because of its conceptual difficulty. Relax Harry: the only way most traditionally anti-intellectual academic Marxists in the U.S. will ever be able to cut through this undecipherable theoretical stump is with a chainsaw. And this is not the result of a poor English translation, which is in fact considerably clearer than the original, but of Negri's total inability to write coherently. And even if he had managed to do that, the result may not have been much better. These "Lessons on the *Grundisse*" were delivered well after it had become obvious that no reinterpretation of Marxism based on newly-translated classical texts would have a political impact sufficiently powerful to displace established official readings. By the mid-1970s the New Left had disintegrated, East European reformists efforts had been defeated, and Eurocommunism was rapidly fading under the blows of internal terrorism, the CIA and the KGB. In fact, long before this translation of Negri's book was even commissioned, the impact of the translation of Marx's *Grundrisse* had already failed either to revitalize Marxism or to provide any new departures. The English translation of the *Grundrisse* appeared in print burdened with an absurd neo-Stalinist "Introduction" by the translator, Martin Nicolaus,[1] which readily preempted any meaningful debate. The translation was published in 1973 — at a time when it could have only

1. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, translated with an introduction by Martin Nicolaus (London, 1973). For a systematic critique of Nicolaus' "Introduction" and general interpretation of the *Grundrisse*, see Paul Piccone, "Reading the *Grundrisse*: Beyond 'Orthodox' Marxism," in *Theory and Society*, 2, 2 (Summer, 1975), pp. 235-255.

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resulted in a re-run of similar earlier efforts by Rosdolsky and Grossman,[2] to unsuccessfully redirect official readings of *Capital* away from the closed mechanistic framework imposed by Moscow. Had it succeeded in convincing Marxists of the continuity of *Capital* with earlier works such as the *Manuscripts of 1844* (which, interestingly enough, Negri rejects, thus objectively siding with that orthodoxy he professedly despises, in opposition to New Left and East European readings) all it could have attained is a new kind of Marxism which, in its openness, would have gradually updated itself out of existence.

Negri wants both the break between the early and the late Marx sanctioned by Marxism-Leninism, as well as the option to reinterpret Marx's *opus* in the names of humanist Marxists, but only in order to go beyond the social democratic political dead-ends reached by official Western European Communist Parties rather than propose any *different* interpretation of Marxism. Thus, the *Grundrisse* is seen as the "summit of Marx's revolutionary thought" (p. 18) — so much so that even "*Capital* seems almost to be a propaedeutic for the *Grundrisse*" (p. 25): it is actually "in advance of *Capital*" (p. 187). Allegedly, there is a break in the sense that Marx's analysis attains new theoretical heights in the *Grundrisse*. The bottom line, however, it that all those "internal" critics of Soviet Marxism attempting to remain Marxists by out-Marxizing official Marxists in invoking the early Marx against the barbarities of "really existing socialism" are out of order. The early humanism is, for Negri, essentially what Soviet Marxists always claimed it was: a theoretical adolescence seeking growth and fulfillment in the maturity of *Capital*. Accordingly, "Althusser is not wrong to consider as a decisive sign of good Marxism the tracing of clear limits and the exclusion of this insipid blubbering from theory" (p. 154). But *Capital* for Negri is not the arrival point for Marxism as a revolutionary theory: it is only the rigorous exposition of the logic of the system which, as such, is itself the *presupposition* of the genetic reconstruction provided in the *Grundrisse* now elevated to the role of *the* crucial theoretical text. Given the underdevelopment of the labor movement at the time, however, Marx could not go much further without falling into utopianism (p. 182) — which is the presumably "materialist" explanation for how Negri can now claim to go beyond Marx. Since the labor movement during the last century has matured, it can now function as the social or universal individual outlined but not coherently elaborated by Marx at the end of the *Grundrisse* — thus the metaphysical deduction by Negri that the working class must be an autonomous subject which, by refusing to work, can impose its will on the capitalist class and once and for all fling it into the traditional dust-bin of history.

For Negri all of this "must be theoretically possible" (p. 181). In spite of rhetoric that subjectivity and struggle are decisive, this process is ultimately guaranteed by a kind of syllogistic apodicticity reminiscent of the most mechanical and determinist versions of vulgar Marxism. And this reveals more

2. Roman Rosdolsky, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des Marxschen 'Kapital'* (Frankfurt, 1967).

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than anything the extent to which Negri has managed to miss the most important lesson of the *Grundrisse*. Thus, far from going *beyond* Marx, Negri remains theoretically well *behind* the achievements of 1857. He never bothers to explain why Marx never finished the *Grundrisse*, written under the impact of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and instead wrote *Capital* following the model of Hegel's *Logic*. Caught within fashionable parameters of ultra-Left discourse, Negri fails to see that, while writing the *Grundrisse*, at the point of extending the analysis to the world market, Marx ran into a formidable and ultimately fatal unforeseen obstacle, the Asiatic mode of production, which eventually forced him to abandon attempts to provide an ontogenetic reconstruction and tackle the same problem in *Capital* by articulating the logical structure of the commodity. The Asiatic mode of production successfully sank the unilinear Marxist theory of history based on the serial succession of modes of production and necessitated a methodological shift. Although still saturated with historical materials, *Capital* does not attempt to trace out a necessary development but, at best, provides a nomological reconstruction whose political implications are highly contingent. It can be read as a bourgeois apology (the young Gramsci), a stable model of economic equilibrium (Hilferding), as well as a revolutionary manual. In the latter case, however, the revolutionary outcome is no longer sanctioned by history, and Lenin was right to stress against the orthodoxy of the Second International the centrality of *voluntarism* for revolution.

Negri is surprisingly brief in treating the problem of the Asiatic mode of production, but he is at least vaguely aware of the problem and acknowledges that Marx's account on the subject is dense, confused and indecisive (p. 119). He goes as far as to admit that "linear development is simply a theoretical hypothesis" (p. 120). But he readily gets around his problems by way of the standard pedestrian recourse to objectivism: "Contradictions and antagonisms are motors which move capital toward even higher levels of contradiction and antagonism" (p. 121). All is well, and history marches inexorably forward to Nirvana or communism.

It is this objectivistic *coup de main* which subsequently allows Negri to deduce the autonomous working class subject from social capital, the dialectic of separation, self-valorization, the refusal to work, and the inevitably violent revolutionary confrontation. Under the euphemism of "multilaterality" (p. 184) he is even able to reintegrate the various struggles of intellectuals, students and other non-proletarian elements within the "new class composition" generated by social capital and plot out the path to communism. The newly-achieved maturity of the labor movement now finally allows Negri, oblivious of the theoretical stumbling block posed by the Asiatic mode of production for a linear theory of history, to essentially write the last chapter of the *Grundrisse* and carry out the very revolution he has otherwise brilliantly deduced. Fancy new bottle for old Leninist wine which, during the last century has long since turned into vinegar.

What is striking in this account is not so much its empirical emptiness and

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arbitrariness, but its lack of originality. This is old stuff warmed over for ready consumption by illiterate *gauchistes* too busy to take the time to study the history of Marxism. The hypothesis of organizational underdevelopment had already been elaborated much better by Karl Korsch to explain the theoretical regression of the Second International.[3] But even Korsch's account failed to convince since it could not explain the genesis of Marx's revolutionary theory in a socially underdeveloped context. In this respect, the young Gramsci was much more coherent and forthright: *Capital* was a work articulating bourgeois interests, and against which a theoretical revolution had to be carried out in order to develop authentic revolutionary consciousness: what he took to be Leninism.[4] Needless to add, all of these interesting theoretical queries were readily put to rest by the Stalinist secret police and rendered historically obsolete by the massive social reorganization undertaken by Fascism, Stalinism and the New Deal. Wooden Marxists of Negri's variety apparently do not like to ponder the implications of the political defeats during the early 1920s and the successful capitalist integration of the socialist program during the inter-war period. It meant, first and foremost, the definitive marginalization of the working class as a meaningful social agency by fragmenting its relation to the means of production — thus also fragmenting its activity and consciousness — and by stratifying it institutionally, thus successfully ruling out any future organizational unity translatable into a political project.

Although Negri has elsewhere dealt extensively with concrete political material, *Marx Beyond Marx* is entirely without historical content, and abstract categories arbitrarily dance to an incomprehensible metaphysical tune. When it seems impossible to go on without minimal historical specificity, Negri manages to evaporate it in mysterious abstractions. Thus, he does not talk about multinational corporations, but about "multinationality" (p. 188); the working class, in flexing its political muscle, is really unfolding its "multilateriality" (p. 184); and the crudest mechanistic processes allegedly generating class consciousness are reintroduced under the heading of the rise of "subjectivity." Even dialectical logic is replaced by the "logic of separation" (p. 181) which makes possible the proletariat as a social subject able to undertake self-valorization. On closer examination this central notion of self-valorization turns out to be nothing more than labor's ability to determine that it is worth more than it is receiving and, unless it gets what it thinks it is worth, to go on strike. Far from entailing a qualitative social transformation, however, in advanced industrial societies strikes are simply internal control mechanisms regulating the system by setting wages and subsequently prices. At best, struggles of this type merely trigger new and more effective strategies of capitalist reorganization. Labor demands too much: capital phases it out by

3. Karl Korsch, *Marxism and Philosophy* (London, 1971).

4. Antonio Gramsci, "The Revolution against *Capital*," in Paul Piccone and Pedro Cavalcanti, eds., *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci*, (St. Louis, Mo., 1976).

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cybernating, emigrating or decentralizing. The working class has today become an irreversibly declining agency of potential change. Stratified into bitterly conflicting groups of workers in the monopoly sector — those in the competitive sector, the organized and the umemployed — they cannot be homogenized into Negri's metaphysical social individuality to lead us to Nirvana. Ironically enough, within such a stratification of the working class, new workers employed in expanding industries by multinational corporations and, consequently, in a position of considerable privilege with respect to all others, tend to be the most conservative and the staunchest defenders of the capitalist *status quo* — the very same potential "social individuals" Negri wants to see as his revolutionary vangard. At a time when communism is increasingly associated with the Gulag and the KGB or, in the most charitable interpretation possible, with arrogant and inefficient bureaucracies, Negri's lesson rings hollow.

The recycling of highly dubious notions such as the falling rate of profit, the party, etc., is effectively spiked with chic French post-structuralist terminology, but to no avail. No matter how much one deploys Foucauldian novelties such as the critique of humanism, discourses, ruptures, diachrony and synchrony, genealogy, etc., the underlying cadaver of orthodox Marxism only attains a minimal cosmetic upgrade. Under it all, it remains as dead as a doorknob. When all is said and done, Negri's Marxism is merely another version of Leninism with dubious claims of "internal democracy from below." His communist party is a more naive and politically dangerous version of the old one he despises which, having learned the lessons of Fascism, Stalinism and of the totally administered society, has retreated to a safe and well-worn social-democratic position defending the limited and partial interests of the working class seen not as a "universal class" or, in Negri's terms, as a "social subject," but as one corporate social group among others.

Given Negri's theoretical poverty, the more titillating question — impossible to answer by simply reading his works — is whether or not he was involved in terrorist activities. The Italian police has yet to come up with a convincing case and it looks increasingly unlikely that a definitive and satisfactory account of his activities will ever be provided. Against the translators, however, who try to show on every page of their tedious introductions that Negri's troubles with Italian law are a function of the threat his ideas pose to the capitalist state, it can unequivocably he said that there is *nothing* in Negri's work that could trigger anything more than a yawn. If the Italian police and security apparatuses were to go after anyone who has written political bombast of this type, they would have to arrest three quarters of the Italian ultra-Left — most of whom have written tirades much more inflammatory and readily comprehensible than Negri's.

In *Marx Beyond Marx* Negri writes about "productive violence" and "the alternation of violence and program, of war and the massification of objectives, of the attack of the avant-garde and of the resistance" (p. 186). This violence is allegedly *fundamental* and unavoidable: it is a "first immediate and

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vigorous affirmation of the necessity of communism" (p. 173). He forcefully emphasizes that "the adversary must be destroyed" (p. 190) and calls for the end of the dialectic since "thinking does not have any autonomy from the collective force." Within this neo-fascist Sorelianized vision of Marxism, he tip-toes at the brink of existential irrationality: in what he takes to be the present on-going revolution "there is no decision to take . . . one is or is not, in communism one lives or does not" (p. 185). But, again, this is not much different from other garden varieties of that Left-fascism fashionable among frustrated and marginalized ultra-Left intellectuals in the mid-1970s. While it does not follow from this that, therefore, the Italian police *must* have anything more solid to go on, it remains utterly unconvincing as an explanation of why they have chosen Negri as a target.

What, then, is one to make of the terrorist turn of a fraction of the ultra-Left? Clearly, it is not a result, as virulent anti-communist ex-communists such as Furet would have it,[5] of Marxism brought to its logical conclusions. Rather, it may have something to do with the developmental paroxysms experienced by an industrial society such as Italy when advanced world capitalism moves to a post-welfare state phase. If such a society is not well prepared, the repercussions of shifting socio-economic paradigms may be more brusque than elsewhere. Thus, both Negri as well as the Italian police's clumsy and disgraceful handling of the whole affair may be complementary embarrassment typical of a, we may hope, now transcended capitalist phase of socio-economic organization.

Paul Piccone

5. François Furet, "Terrorism and Democracy," in *Telos* 66 (Fall, 1985), pp. 75-86.

Anna Boschetti, *Sartre et "Les Temps Modernes."* Paris: Les Editions de Minuit/lesens commun, 1985.

Among the shooting stars that have crossed the contemporary French cultural scene for fifteen years, aided by media sensationalism, we have yet to see a comet of some magnitude. The conspicuous absence of an influence like Sartre's raises many questions. Sartre and his times would seem a natural subject matter but, apart from Annie Cohen Solal's best-selling biography, Gallimard's constant stream of posthumous works has failed to turn Sartre into a media event.[1] And yet, it now seems likely that Roland Barthes was right

1. Cf. Richard Bernstein, "Revisionists and Storytellers — Is It Passé to Be Engagé?" *The New York Times Book Review*, Jan. 5, 1986, p. 3.

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when, back in the seventies, he proposed that Sartre would be suddenly "rediscovered" and that it would happen "soon, in a completely natural way."[2]

In both France and the U.S., persistent anguish over the problems of violence, terrorism and national liberation movements, has rekindled debate about Sartre. What makes these arguments striking are the *ad hominem* attacks and the tendency to distort Sartre's views. But these heated polemics signal an uneasy feeling that, underneath his gadfly style, Sartre raised larger problems. Claude Lanzmann has charged that recent attacks on Sartre are a smug refusal to confront the broader political dilemmas of intellectuals.[3] Similarly, in the U.S., frivolous and unproductive skirmishes have blocked a serious debate.[4]

This is not a call for some "back-to-Sartre renaissance." Cogent ways of thinking about the world are not necessarily found *in* Sartre's books as much as *through* them.[5] From *La nausée* to *L'Idiot de la famille*, one of the key ideas underlying Sartre's lifework is the extent to which intellectuals influence their politico-cultural milieu through consciously pursued self-images and choices. In today's somnolent French intellectual stage, Sartre's view poses two questions. If we agree that Sartre was a talented and influential intellectual, are such figures formed by 'environmental' factors? And, if so, does this process

2. Reported by Michel Contat in "Sartre at Seventy: An Interview," *The New York Review of Books*, Aug. 7, 1975, p. 14.

3. See the interview with Claude Lanzmann, "Sartre: Le courage et la lucidité dans l'engagement," *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 471 (Oct. 85) pp. 417-21.

4. The L. Paggi-P. Pinzauti article on "Peace and Security," *Telos*, No. 63, (Spring '85) is a thinly disguised, second-hand misinterpretation of Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, regurgitated from R. Aron's violence-obsessed reading (pp. 30-2; 34 *et passim*). The real object of attack, wrenched out of context, is Sartre's 1961 "Preface" to F. Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. In the same issue, F. Fehér's "Redemptive and Democratic Paradigms in Radical Politics" briefly refers to the "Preface" in more guarded, yet ambivalent terms (p. 153). Both issues resurface in Paul Breines' half-hearted remarks in "Redeeming Redemption," *Telos*, No. 65 (Fall '85), pp. 153-4, which do not dispell the ambiguity about what the *Critique* is *all* about. Above all, since all three pieces are silent and/or uninformed on Sartre's distinctions between terrorism and violence, they contribute to tunnel vision politics *vis à vis* burning problems. In addition to the 1960 *Critique*, see J.-P. Sartre, *Cahiers pour une morale* (1947-48), (Paris, Gallimard, 1983), p. 24; 109-11; 194-7; 216 ff; 419-20 *et passim* (hereafter cited as *Morale*). See also, Simone de Beauvoir, *Entretiens avec Jean-Paul Sartre* in *La Cérémonie des adieux*, (Gallimard, 1981), pp. 191 ff; 547-52 (hereafter *Entretiens '74*); see also, Benny Lévy, "Today's Hope: Conversations with Sartre," *Telos*, No. 44 (Summer '80), pp. 155-81. For other opposing views on the meaning of the Fanon "Preface," cf. H. Marcuse's reassessments in the 1965 "Postscript" to "Sartre's Existentialism" (1948) in *Studies in Critical Philosophy*, (Beacon Press, Boston, 1972); F. Fergnani, *La cosa umana*, (Feltrinelli, Milano, 1978), p. 257 ff., and an excellent treatment by Thomas R. Flynn in *Sartre and Marxist Existentialism*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 62-64.

5. From an introductory comment by Massimo Barale, in *Il tramonto del liberale: Sartre e la crisi della teoria politica*, Napoli, Guida Editori, 1981, p. 12.

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flourish in a competitive, self-questioning setting or does it spring from the nerve to break from a self-inflated intellectual circle? Anna Boschetti's recent book on *Sartre et "Les Temps Modernes"* frames such questions and invites assessments of Sartre's relevance to today's intellectual climate.

Boschetti's "intellectual enterprise" (her subtitle) portrays Sartre and *Les Temps Modernes* as a "success story" nurtured, rather than 'caused,' by complex and interacting subfields coexisting within the broader intellectual milieu. Boschetti limits her topic to the personalities, conditions and intellectual output that precipated the founding of *T.M.* in October 1945 and follows them through to the end of the journal's "hegemonic" phase in 1952-3. Thus, the ensuing period of *T.M.*'s decline is secondary in her book. The term "intellectual enterprise" refers to Sartre's creation of *T.M.* which Boschetti studies through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the social/intellectual "field" (*le champ*). The "field" is the environment, context or circle that encompasses all persons and things cultural ranging from networks of publishers, writers, critics and academics to the personal biographies and social origins that, depending on particular educational backgrounds, find their way into books, reviews and cultural products in general.

This all-inclusive and cumbersome theory becomes more so by the assumption that the field is in constant motion and all elements blend with all others to engender yet new fields. For example, the *reception* of a *radical play* by a *provincial working-class* audience invokes a minimum of five "fields" in addition to that of broader cultural *impact*. The "field" schema is heavily indebted to Weber's relatively "autonomous economy" of "religious goods" which Bourdieu has crafted into his own conception of the relative autonomy of "symbolic goods" — the intellectual environment.[6]

For Bourdieu and Boschetti, relative autonomy is "the essential condition of a symbolic economy which is characterized by its own operating logic. Social demand remains decisive, but its effect works in combination with internal field demand" (p. 8). The field is formed by external social demand and, inside, by the activities of practitioners in relation to resources and opportunities termed "strategies"; equally important is personal "profile" (*l'habitus*), i.e., "the sum of socially acquired features that lend shape to strategies" (p. 9). Aside from producing alliances, regroupings and, in the case of intellectuals, theories and schools, the field's identity pivots on "intellectual legitimacy" which is a "symbolic value" derived from peer recognition. This legitimacy "excludes commercial logic and the pursuit of economic profit, even though it may help to enhance it." However, economic disinterest and

6. Boschetti relies on the following works by Pierre Bourdieu: "Genèse et structure du champ religieux," *Revue Française de sociologie*, XII, 1971; *Le sens pratique*, Paris, Ed. de Minuit, 1980; "Champ intellectuel et projet créateur," *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 246 (Nov. '66); "Le marché des beins symboliques," *L'Année sociologique*, vol. 22, 1971; "Champ du pouvoir, champ intellectuel et habitus de classe," *Scolies*, No. 1, 1971; "La production de la croyance," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, No. 13, Feb. 1977.

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contempt for cultural goods as commodities remain salient features of the field's relative autonomy from social and economic circles (*ibid.*).

The elasticity of the "field" raises questions about its theoretical rigor and, especially, about the meaning of "relative autonomy." As Boschetti's book progresses one realizes that legitimacy was not *really* a determining element in "consecrating" the Sartre-*T.M.* association as a "success." Boschetti submits from the start that Sartre was *already* a "success" by 1945 (pp. 14-21). As one might suspect, socio-cultural upbringing and educational background are far more determining for a strategic accumulation of "symbolic capital" and legitimacy. The author makes that abudantly clear by dissecting the titles, alma maters, and social provenance of practically all natural and legal persons contiguous to the Sartre-*T.M.* field. So, does "Sartre become a success because he was a success"? Not quite. Unfortunately, tautological tendences are already built into the Bourdieu schema. The broad stretch of factors included in the "field" can construct either a story of success or failure. Boschetti ignores this shortcoming and concentrates on Bourdieu's theory as an alternative to the "reflection theory" of cultural production. As she states it, Lukács, Adorno and Goldmann treat symbolic goods as a function of economic/class stratification. They cannot explain the "variety of forms embodied in products of the same class, at the same epoch" (p. 8). For example, Aron's sheltered bourgeois upbringing and elite schooling at the École Normale shaped a prominent figure, yet not the *éclat* and the dominant presence of Sartre who had the same socio-educational qualifications.

The secret to Sartre's success lies in his sustained *domination* over the entire cultural field by proving excellent in as many sub-fields as possible and by theoretical and practical activities of direct impact on the broader cultural and political scene. In simple economic terms, domination is not a question of monopoly as much as of establishing as many diversified enterprises as possible and of accumulating and constantly reproducing capital. According to Boschetti, the key ingredients for a thriving "symbolic goods" market are high internal competitiveness and social demand.

The Sartre-*T.M.* hegemony starts after the war with existentialism and the founding of the journal as the battleground of Sartre's "commitment." Boschetti shows that this commitment — spelled out in the *T.M.* "Presentation" and numerous articles and interviews — was not a mere 'bubble' or just the feisty ravings of a clever climber throwing a fad with an eye to fame.

Instead, it marks Sartre's resolve to stake for himself a territory, apart from a vaster field where he had already broken through all traditional demarcations and had already swept all titles and credentials. Sartre's unprecedented achievement was to have pioneered a new "field" by proving himself *both* the brilliant literary "creator" *and* "professor" *before* his "commitment" and the founding of *T.M.* Boschetti thoroughly documents Sartre's novelty in the history of the French socio-cultural context. Until the mid-1930s, French culture was defined by and thrived on the prestige-laden opposition between "professors" of philosophy and literary "creators." These categories represent two

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irreconcilable cultural traditions between, a) writers as "creators" of "originality" and "imagination" with a "glorious vocation" of atemporal impact that shelters them in the aloof domain of 'art for art's sake'; and b) "professors" of "philosophy" who preside over all disciplines and assign a secondary role to science. The content and form of "philosophy," in the exclusive temple of the École Normale, imposed a theoretical stanglehold of "spiritualism" and "anti-determinism" on a whole range of social/human sciences: for all practical purposes, until the 1950s, history, psychology, sociology, etc., lived undifferentiated under "philosophy" (p. 83 ff).

Finally, social stratification is also crucial, as illustrated by Émile Zola's statement, "if you sow professors, you shall never reap creators" (p. 26). Traditionally, French "creators" come from the leisure class (*rentiers*) and, scorning economic and/or careerist concerns, devote themselves to the "imaginary" as in the cases of Flaubert, Proust, Valéry or Gide. In contrast, the pursuit of a university "chair" in "philosophy" established an aristocracy of "merit" for seekers of security and respectability who came from the low-bourgeoisie and found self-legitimation in the production of "erudition." The models here are the pre-Sartre generation of Bergson, Brunschvig and Alain (pp. 27-30). Early 20th century educational reforms created exceptional "creators" like R. Rolland, J. Romains or J. Giraudoux who went through the École Normale before turning exclusively to literature. Nonetheless, no practicing, *bona fide* "philosopher" ever secured an additional foothold as a "creator" nor did an established writer ever try to span the circle of philosophy professors.

Thus, by 1945 Sartre was the uncontestable leader of a one-man "field" that overshadowed all previous watersheds. On the "erudition" side, the four books on emotion and imagination (1936-40), the essay on Husserl's intentionality (1939) and *L'Etre et le néant* (1943) introduced provocative formulations on the philosophical problems of the day — contingency, duality, freedom and determinism — through the simultaneous use of strictly philosophical methods *and* literary devices. At the same time, his "originality" in 'myth-making' amassed impressive capital with the best-selling *La nausée* (1939), followed by novellas in *Le mur* (1939), the play *Les mouches* (1943) and the literature of *Huis clos* (1944), *Le sursis* and *L'âge de raison* (1945)[7] (pp. 36-55).

The crowning touch came when, despite his need to work for a living (since he was a *boursier* and not a *rentier*), Sartre refused to become a "professor." This expression of contempt for security, his scandalous way of life and, later on,

7. M. Contat's and M. Rybalka's *Les Ecrits de Sartre* (Gallimard, 1970) is constantly being recompounded with the discovery and publication of old manuscripts. In the *Obliques* No. 18-19 special Sartre issue (1978), Contat, Rybalka and J. Prunair also include a list of unpublished works (pp. 345-7). In addition to the 1940 *Les Carnets de la drôle de guerre*, (Gallimard, 1983), there is a minimum of 18 works in literature, philosophy and theater between about 1922-1944.

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his total refusal to share the hierarchical values and rewards that, in his view, muzzle writers and turn them into "national monuments," led to vehement peer reactions.[8]

Working painstakingly from his philosophy to the literature, Boschetti shows how Sartre's dazzling way of addressing every important point of view and of exposing himself to all novel and avant-garde movements of the era (from surrealism, to Freud, Dos Passos, Husserl and Heidegger) shook the "spiritualist" philosophical edifice. She follows Sartre slowly from his self-portrait of the solitary cerebral hero of *La nausée* to his appropriation of Husserlian ideas that bridge literature and philosophy and bring Sartre to the critical point: his total disenchantment with Husserl and the 1939-40 desperate search for a way out of the philosophical deadlock encountered in the real world of objects (pp. 55-75). Sartre's real turning point is 1939-40. Intellectual formation, the experiences of war, occupation, captivity and liberation, all intersects with historicity in the thought of Heidegger. Temporality and the meaning of freedom for a socially responsible writer are the catalysts for an "anti-determinist" existentialist stand and for the passage from "fame to prophecy" (p. 80). Boschetti is quite right in emphasizing that Sartre's "commitment," precipitated by personal war experiences and Heidegger, was Sartre's real "conversion," later made concrete by the founding of *T.M.*[9] Sartre overcame his neurosis by turning literature into a search for effective ethical values and by exploring morality *through* literature that seeks truth, rather than beauty (pp. 80-1). In the language of *L'Idiot de la famille*, it was his equivalent to Flaubert's 'pont-l'Evêque episode.'

Therefore, I want to stress here that Sartre's alleged subsequent "conversion to Marxism" — a fairly prevalent view among Sartre specialists — was nothing of the sort. Although Boschetti does not deal specifically with whether Sartre 'turned Marxist' or not, the bulk of her investigation clearly supports this point of view. She indicates that while 'sympathizing' with FCP politics, Sartre defined himself through a strong anti-materialist stand and tried to keep a clear theoretical distance from the "determinist" and "disciplinarian" doctrines of official French Marxism (p. 142 ff; 154 ff).

8. Gabriel Marcel, the catholic existentialist professor of philosophy, probably never pardoned Sartre's insult to the academe; the Pope's "indexing" of all Sartre works in 1948 must have helped together with Sartre's anti-French activities during the Algerian war. All of which is mirrored in Marcel's outrage at Sartre's rejection of the 1964 Nobel prize when he called Sartre "inveterate denigrator, systematic blasphemist, man of pernicious and poisonous view, patented corruptor of youth, grave-digger of the West"; reported by Istvan Meszaros in "Jean-Paul Sartre, A Critical Tribute," *The Socialist Register*, 1975, p. 1. For Sartre's own attitude toward prizes, honors and rewards and a related row with Aron, see *Entretiens '74*, pp. 319-25.

9. Sartre's posthumously published *Carnets de la drôle de guerre*, fully bear out the impact of Heideggerian ideas in conjunction with his four-year struggle against the impasse of Husserlian solipsism. Cf. *Carnets*, pp. 224-30 which describes the paucity and "senility" of the French philosophical scene of the time.

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The field approach shows how personal histories and educational formation of Sartre and *T.M.* founders (Aron, de Beauvoir, Leiris, Merleau-Ponty, Ollivier and Paulhan) bumped against practical politics and theoretical antinomies to yield different intellectual trajectories. A major ingredient was the FCP's "official Marxism" (Garaudy, Lefèbvre, Lefort), with impressive resistance credentials and an "abstract," rigid, oversimplifying and mechanical vision of the world (p. 137 ff). The rise of a critical Marxism in France was blocked by this mixture of "*a priori* dogmatism," messianism and post-war self-importance that made anti-Soviet sentiment a taboo until the 1950s (p. 247-50). The FCP as an unassailable abstraction underlies the 1949 Sartre-Lukács polemics, as well as Merleau-Ponty's *Humanism and Terror* where his 1945-47 "ultrabolshevism" calls for "carrying out the revolutionist politics of the FCP" (p. 250-2).

The second influential ingredient of the period was the persistently garbled, partial and haphazard reception of Marxian texts and ideas. The philosophical duty of the highly centralized educational institutions of eternalist France was to inculcate upon an elite student body the "spiritualist" obligation to renounce "Marxist determinism" construed univocally as a "metaphysical materialism," radically opposed to the "freedom" of "the subject" (pp. 80-90). Stimulating incursions by Kojève, Koyré, Russian anarchists, Bataille or Lacan introduced Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard and Freud into the tangle. But for both Merleau-Ponty and Sartre, intellectualist and metaphysical preoccupations died hard. For Sartre, Freud's methods were challenging but the "doctrine" had to be discarded because of Sartre's view of consciousness (pp. 87-108; 250-5). Sartre's account of how university-style readings of *Capital* and the *German Ideology* "didn't change him one bit" speak volumes.[10] War experiences, post-war social conditions and the growth of critical theory eventually led Sartre from mere 'sympathizing' to a belated, uncritical pro-Sovietism and, only by 1960, to a clear confrontation with Marxism. After the war, Sartre's "Socialisme et Liberté" group, while entirely muddled on differences between Marx and the French CP Marxism, explored the possibilities of individual *and* collective freedom *against* and/or *beyond* 'socialism.'[11] Because of his long philosophical nurturing on the "antinomy" of socialism and freedom, Sartre took a long time to decide that Marx's dialectical materi-

10. Cf. Sartre, *Search for a Method*, (Vintage Books, New York, 1968), pp. 19-23; Chapter I, *The Critique of Dialectical Reason I*, (London, 1976). Also, for an amusing spar with de Beauvoir about "when and what did Sartre know about the 'class struggle,' " cf. *Entretiens '74*, pp. 486-7.

11. In 1974 Sartre gave a lucid view of the theoretical and political contradictions as perceived at the time; see *Entretiens '74*, pp. 452-9, 502. He also specifies that the title of his conversations with Pierre Victor referred to a reformulation of the earlier antimony. *Pouvoir et liberté* considers the problem of freedom against/beyond the constraints of power and power institutions. See also the Sartre-M. Sicard "Entretien," *Obliques, op. cit.*, p. 14 ff, and the Benny Lévy interview in *Telos* No. 44, *op. cit.*, p. 168 on the "problem of democracy"; p. 175, on power.

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alism could offer a *sufficiently* valid historical framework to situate *within it* individual free praxis. By 1960, Sartre's self-clarification was hardly controversial and long overdue.

In sum, by locating Sartre's "conversion" in the resistance/Heidegger nexus, Boschetti reduces indirectly the Marxist 'factor' to a 'given,' an unquestioned aspect of the "objective spirit" of the era. In so doing she agrees with what here seems quite clear from Sartre's own early posthumous accounts. His *Lettres au Castor* (1926-63), *Les Carnets de la drôle de guerre* (1940) and his *Cahiers pour une morale* (1947-8) show Sartre vehemently opposted to an "objectivist" (*chosiste*), "determinist materialism"[12]; yet all the while he, confusedly and unintelligibly, worked with a vague vision of 'socialism' as the unchallengeable ethico-historical horizon of the times.[13] Sartre's "conversion" and what Boschetti calls his "prophetism" start a prolonged and bumpy dialogue with the FCP that led him from *The Communists and Peace* (1949), to the histrionics of *The Ghost of Stalin* (1956), and finally, the immediate break with CP politics. Since Sartre's critical settling of accounts with Marx and Marxism took another 3-4 years, it cannot be read back into 1945 as a "conversion."

Sartre's "prophetism" in Boschetti is based on Bourdieu's Weberian analysis of the "field of religious goods," in "Genèse et structure du champ religieux." "Prophetism," at a time of crisis, pits individual or group challenges against the very institutional framework that has bred them and has proved incapable of resolving that crisis. The extraordinary prominence of "the gaze" (*le regard*) in Sartre's entire work makes him a perfect example of the "seer." The gaze of *La nausée*'s solitary hero which coincides with the distanced 'voice' of *L'Etre et le néant*, now turns to see and understand the world by active involvement (p. 132-5). For Sartre, the catalytic confrontation with Heidegger ended his project of writing 'beautiful' literature and unmasked the bankruptcy of the traditional French philosophical milieu.

By limiting herself to the *T.M.* hegemonic phase, Boschetti misses an opportunity to follow Sartre's transformation from the "seer" to the "third" (*le tiers*) developed fully in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. In this light, the notion of the "gaze" or "look" proves fundamental in linking Sartre's early literature to his phenomenological ontology and his social ontology as well. Also, the nodal point of the Heidegger/conversion 'climate' should have been emphasized more on the basis of Sartre's 1939-40 *Carnets*, which is barely mentioned by Boschetti.[14]

12. Sartre, J.P., *Lettres au Castor*, vol. I, 1926-39; vol. II, 1930-63 (Gallimard, Paris, 1983).

13. Further elaboration on this point is outside the present scope. Suffice it to note in *Morale* 'programmatic statements' on socialism, such as: "*Today's* ethics must be revolutionary socialist" (p. 20). This school-boy type motto stands dangling and undeveloped; later on comes a sudden and heated attack on Marxism's inability to explain scientific revolutions, the atomic age, the Russian revolution, etc., p. 86 ff.

14. Among the sequence of *undeveloped* references to *Carnets* on p. 111, I would stress pp. 224-9 where Sartre describes his avid reception of a 'dogma' that he even-

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In the hegemonic Sartre-*T.M.* phase, "field theory" gathers the variables that produced historic transformations in the editorial board and the journal's outlook. Starting with the 1945 environment, Boschetti examines *T.M.*'s competitors, *L'Esprit*, *Critique*, and *La Nouvelle Critique* and also, their editors and their claims to intellectual influence. In the *T.M.* "field," hegemony revolves around four actors — the founders, the collaborators, the academics and the artists. Sartre always remained the legitimating link amoung the four groups. One year after the journal's appearance, Aron's departure marks the beginning of a long antagonism with Sartre, as well as three ensuing years of an unchallenged Sartre-Merleau-Ponty domination of both internal and external *T.M.* fields. From this point on, the flux of exchanges between Sartre, the prophet, and Merleau-Ponty, the brilliant academic turned *engagé*, moved in relation to FCP positions regarding national and international politics. Boschetti details this intellectual and political relation through to its estrangement and how the texts, personalities and entourage molded both men.

While Sartre frequently lagged behind by adopting political positions Merleau-Ponty had abandoned, Boschetti's sensitive portrayal reveals two innovators who, long after their break, were still seriously replying to each other's *common* theoretical heritage at great personal expense. Once again, the notions of "strategies" and "field" capture the absence of careerist premediation on the part of both, even as they were dedicated to their 'vocation.' Merleau-Ponty's political exposure damaged his academic career and, despite productive contacts with other "fields" and movements (e.g., Lévi-Strauss), he never escaped existentialism's subjectivist concerns (pp. 250-89). Similarly, after a slow warming-up to Merleau-Ponty's politics, Sartre's use of *T.M.* as *the* existentialist instrument pushed him to political extremes (pp. 243-60). By 1952-3 when Merleau-Ponty leaves, the journal is already "journalistic" and uncritically supportive of Sartre.

The 1962 reshuffling of the board involved lesser personalities, of lower "capital" and eager for recognition at a time when, in addition to having more 'space' (Camus and Merleau-Ponty were dead), the field underwent revolutionary changes: i.e., the end of the Algerian war, de Gaulle's return, the academic explosion of the social sciences and new reviews around the structuralists, Barthes, Foucault and Goldmann. As *T.M.* declined, all those associated with it in the previous decade left with significantly increased capital to join new "fields."

Boschetti concludes that though Sartre conquered his era in the hegemonic years of *T.M.*, those years are now being repudiated as damaging to his work. Esoteric aspects of Sartre's lesser known works are all that Sartre's work "can aspire to, nowadays" (pp. 314-50). With this abrupt ending the field approach joins the camp of regional investigations and raises questions first, about its

tually made his own and turned against both French traditional philosophy and Marxism. For a far more elaborate account on Sartre and Heidegger, cf. William R. Schroeder, *Sartre and His Predecessors: The Self and the Other*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1984).

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specific contribution to Sartre and, secondly, about the utility of the concept in general.

On the first issue the "field" works positively for the most part. As I have argued, shifting emphasis to the pre-hegemonic phase of *T.M.* [situates Sartre's "conversion" to 1940] and clarifies the various ingredients of his post-war commitment. By reinforcing this view, the "field" helps to detract from the stale and overinflated Marxist conversion that has long blurred Sartre scholarship. Therefore, we could soon expect new interest in *other* influences upon Sartre — above all, his confrontation with Freud which has been spared from such vituperations, albeit largely as a matter of neglect.

Another area that field theory illuminates is how Sartre's reception in other "fields" enhanced or impeded his own success. Sartre's hegemony signified the creation of an entirely new "field" by an intellectual who had already challenged and awed his peers through his total involvement in *all* fields. Underneath the cerebral dazzle, Sartre's prolific profile was impelled by a deeply 'ethical' tone which, quickened by literary language, foreshadowed provocative intellectual and real-life possibilities.

This 'ethical' urgency for exploring yet-unknown ways of thinking or living left a lasting impression on Sartre's public long after *T.M.*'s decline but, until recently, was largely lost on Anglo-Saxon audiences. The problem is one of temporal and/or cultural 'lag' in the ways and "fields" an intellectual is received and, in turn, in the effect that reception creates later on his subsequent work. In essence, Sartre's entire evolution proceeds on lag. When he's about to become a prophet, the field as a whole is already "behind" and still chewing on ideas that had not had a chance to exhaust themselves in between the World Wars. Marx, Weber, Hegel, Freud, *et. al.*, were smuggled into a cultural context that, thirsty for Heidegger, read his *Metaphysics* in translation before any of Husserl's works appeared.[15] Soon after the journal was launched, Sartre's own lag begins: in 1947 he takes up Merleau-Ponty's political positions, he starts on long works that he does not care to finish and spreads himself too thin.[16]

However, the most damaging type of lag to Sartre's "ethical" profile was due to the belated reaction of Anglo-Saxon intellectual fields to Sartre as "creator-professor-turned-prophet." The point is not that Sartre remained unappreciated because he did not produce the *Ethics* promised at the end of *L'Etre et le Néant*. The problem lies in the configuration of Anglo-Saxon "fields" which break Sartre into disciplines and periods, pigeon-holing *L'Etre et le Néant* here, *La nausée* there and the critical essays and journalism still elsewhere. When 'experts' finish severing and sundering Sartre's philosophy from his biographies, his Existentialism from his Marxism and his literature

15. Sartre, *Carnets*, p. 228.

16. *The Ghost of Stalin*, the only work Sartre regretted writing (cf. *Entretiens '74*, p. 506), is indeed a "pathetic book," as George Ross put it. What makes it really pathetic for *us today*, is not *what* it said (by comparison, say, to Lukács, or some ten years later, to Althusser even) but *when* it was said.

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from his metaphysics, some are sure to find him either too short or too long. Sartre's novelty, as field theory illuminates, is that he is part of all these genres, *as a matter of moral principle*. In the fascinating 394-page *Entretiens* with Simone de Beauvoir he explains that the reason he learned to do philosophy was because he believed that "if he specialized in philosophy, he would learn all about the world that he had to describe in literature." Further on, when asked whether future audiences should prefer his literature over his philosophy, he answers, "both"; but, according to his "hierarchy," philosophy ranks second: "I wish to become immortal through literature, philosophy was only a means for getting there."[17]

This illustrates the difference between an intellectual's self-definition and the way other "fields" or parties define him. When treated by philosophy 'specialists' Sartre's case is bound to be misunderstood. For example, when R. Aronson considers "society" the "missing term" from Sartre's second volume of the *Critique*, he fails to understand the object of both volumes. And, coming from a "field" that clearly shuts out literary allusions, he misses the preparatory role that philosophy plays in all of Sartre's works.[18] In both the first and the recently published second volume, Sartre is not concerned with providing still *another* theory of society. The first *Critique* deals *not* with whether societies exist or not, but with the kind of social formations (series or groups) that are *logically* possible in order that history be a man-made dialectic. In the second, unfinished volume, the object was whether this 'logic' could measure

17. S. de Beauvoir, *Entretiens '74*, pp. 177, 201 and 217 respectively. Unfortunately, Boschetti uses this work very sparingly.

18. Aronson locates the *Critique*'s problem in "society," the "missing term." Cf. "Sartre's Turning Point: The Abandoned *Critique de la Raison Dialectique*, vol. II" in Schilpp, P.A., ed., *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre*, (Open Court Publs., LaSalle, Ill., 1981), pp. 685-707. Aronson fails to see the centrality of "need" in the dialectic of individual and collective praxis. For him, the dialectic is a theory of knowledge *about* history — an idea Sartre clearly ridicules in *CRD II* because it suggests the point of view of a Martian watching from the outside as humanity 'repeats itself.' Cf. Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique*, Tome II (inacheve): *L'Intelligibilite de l'Histoire*, (Gallimard, Paris, 1985) (*CRD* II, p. 328 ff). For another view opposing Aronson's, cf. Simont, Juliette, "*La Critique de la raison dialectique*: du besoin, circulairement," *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 472 (Nov. '85), pp. 733-52. Over the years, Ronald Aronson has done remarkably insensitive articles on aspects of *CRD I* (see *Telos*, No. 13, Fall '72; and No. 16, Summer '73), now part of his book, *Jean-Paul Sartre: Philosophy in the World*, (Verso/NLB, London, 1980). Among his most striking comments was the view that *L'Idiot de la famille* is irrelevant because it is "an imaginary study about an imaginary man," when of course, it is *neither*. His one (and telling) point is that Sartre used too much imagination; the question is, by comparison to whom? Freud perhaps? Cf. "The Ultimate Sartre?", *Telos*, No. 20 (Summer '74), p. 94. For more balanced works on Sartre's social ontology, see Flynn, *op. cit.*; Gila J. Hayim, *The Existential Sociology of Jean-Paul Sartre*, (Univ. of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 1980); and Istvan Meszaros, *The Work of Sartre*, Vol. I, (Humanities Press, 1979). A section of the work appeared as "Phases of Sartre's Development," *Telos*, No. 25 (Fall '75), pp. 112-132.

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up to the actual evolution of events. Although abandoned (because it involved re-writing some 50 years of world history,[19] the second volume manages to cover well-documented territory that is bound to invite serious socio-historical study. The specific analysis of the Russian "classless" society depicts it as a serial association of "I"s. This leads Sartre to the politico-ethical conclusion that "we"-type societies entail *de facto* moral interhuman relations, i.e., they cannot be generated by *de jure* moral edicts that outlaw classes by imposing "equality" and "fraternity" from the outside. Thus, one of the crucial conclusions of the second *Critique* is that *need* is the only ontological structure that can sustain a "we-praxis."[20]

Sartre explored the "we" in literary terms, through essays, art criticism, film strips and plays, in addition to novels. Today, Sartre-type generalists are an extinct species. Since the late 1950s, the generalist outlook has eroded. From structuralist, geneological, deconstructionist and Wittgensteinian linguistic theories, the discontinuous approach has predominated. By sweeping away the previous "brilliant superficiality" of the generalist,[21] the new erudition renders the human sciences impervious to each other and instrumentalizes them for bureaucratic specialists. Social science serves the piece-meal ways of "managerial pragmatism."[22] The new "technicians of knowledge" are relieved from bad conscience by limiting the scope of philosophy to a repetitive, deconstructive search for 'foundations' of a self-referential field.[23] In effect, the social and economic fields have endowed specialized knowledge with unprecendented political power. One of the most pitiful policies of recent socialist administrations in France (as in Greece) was the *en masse* recruitment of "expert" intellectuals and 'glitterati' to high government and educational posts. Their resounding failures were more than compensated by their masterful manipulation of social and political "capital" consecrated in the "symbolic goods" market. Media connections and positions have offered them a unique platform for personal visibility and culture peddling while in the popular imagination they were dismissed as "intellectuals" — a class by themselves.[24]

In his last years Sartre defined the "problem of democracy" in terms of

19. As he explains in *Entretiens '74*, he "never wrote volume II, it's just notes"; both volumes of *CRD* expanded from *Search for a Method*, which was his philosophical 'preparation' for writing *L'Idiot de la famille*. Cf. pp. 215-6; 224-5.

20. *CRD*, II, p. 390-9.

21. Boschetti constrasts this elite-bred mentality of the French educational system to the rigorous methodology of the Germanic model. *op. cit.*, p. 166 ff.

22. For Bernard Crick, it is the other extreme of Marxist determinism; see, *In Defense of Politics*, (Penguin Books, N.Y., 1982 ed.), p. 212.

23. For the features of the *techniciens du savoir pratique* and their relationship to power, see, Sartre, "Les Intellectuels," *Situations VIII*, (Gallimard, Paris, 1972), pp. 377-400.

24. See, Georges Veltsos, "L'Intellectuel grec," *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 473 (Dec. '85) pp. 988-1001 for the current equivalent Greek scene.

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making a *real* we-society workable, *given* the framework and/or constraints of power.[25] When applied to intellectuals endowed with power-legitimated social and economic functions, they are part of the problem and the solution as well. The need to produce 'social goods,' as opposed to personal fads obviously cannot be externally dictated. Also, public service does not exactly demand a Sartrean sense of 'commitment.' All the same, for intellectuals as a group — or a "field" — the "we," i.e., the question of social and ethical responsibility remains.

Today's changed social and intellectual potential raises the challenge of *re-defining the generalist imagination.* Although the 1980s seem inimical to the notion of generalism, attempts to rationalize relativism — however serious or realistic — betray deep discomfort and a wistfulness for the invulnerability of 'smaller' claims. After all, the generalist paradigm has yet to be declared dead or undesirable. The continuing impact of Foucault, for example, points to a sustained legitimacy as well as demand for an activist outlook that channels the generalist sensitivity into changing socio-intellectual problems.

Ironically, theoretical tools like the "field" mirror the antinomies blocking the generalist re-definition while also hinting at the intrinsic discontinuity of its components. Thus, as Boschetti's early Sartre gains flesh and bones, the trappings of Bourdieu's methodology produce a tenuous definition of "decline" when dealing with Sartre's middle and later years. Regional in scope, field theory tends to functionalism, circularity and ahistoricity due to a built-in formalistic criteria. The object of investigation is selected on the basis of *a priori* features later used to prove the theory. In Sartre's case, his "decline" is tautologically attributed to the sclerosis of one "field" and the burgeoning of new ones. Therefore, since the rise of intellectual magnets is predicated on their *own* creation of a "field," the theory's focus on the field has little value. To salvage it, one needs to balance it with a critique of the role of the subject, one that goes beyond mere interpretation.

In effect, once we realize how much the "field" relies on the phenomenon of prophetism, it becomes evident that the whole enterprise hinges on the prior existence of extraordinary talent and on Weber's charismatic personality. In the Sartre success story "field" analysis is uncritically premised on charisma and does not advance beyond the classic Weberian formulation on the links between charisma and its routinization. As in Weber's *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, charisma remains an elusive trait of individuals unsusceptible to analytical rules, anti-economically motivated and prone to revolutionary behaviour through prophetism. The presence of rules or, in Bourdieuan terms, "fields" identifiable on the basis of social demand and competitiveness, reiterates Weber's analysis of *Alltag*, i.e., the features of organizational routine that eventually brings decline and tarnishes charisma by subjecting it to the same rules (or "field" exigencies) that are empirically used to identify it.

25. The Sartre-M. Sicard "Entretien," *op. cit.*, pp. 14-16; and the Benny Lévy interview, *Telos*, No. 44, *op. cit.*

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Thus, the incidence of charisma is a fragile 'moment' ascertainable *ex post facto — through* the field of relations that accommodate it organizationally. Since the routinization process causes "decline" by breeding security-seeking 'successors' or new "fields," the worn Weberian description remains unchanged.

In sum, field theory dismantles and then reassembles what we already know to be the case. Worse still, its dependence on criteria such as "rules" and "strategies" rationalizes and renders excessively fluid the connection between charisma — an inherently ambiguous, eccentric and discontinuous phenomenon — and the way it translates into (analyzable) social mechanisms.

When the challenge of re-defining the generalist imagination is taken up, Sartre will be rediscovered and Barthes' prediction will prove correct. Once purged of topicality, Sartre's prophetism invariably discloses a generalism axed on an ethical perspective. As his posthumous writings show, the ethical kernel of his generalism had nothing to do with renaissance-gilded aestheticism or moral posturing. By rejecting fixed moral prescriptives Sartre emerges disciplined by an oriented eclecticism, an urgency for constantly 'sorting through,' precariously balanced between the necessity of taking risks and the resistance to intellectual trendiness. This might also explain his vulnerability, his 'lags' and the ingenuous 'blunders.'

With the exception of the Benny Lévy dialogue on *Pouvoir et liberté* — publicized and made controversial before Sartre released it[26] — Sartre never finished his two previous works, the 1947-8 *Cahiers pour une morale* and the three sets of Rome lecture notes from 1964.[27] Speaking of the early ethics in 1974, he protested to de Beauvoir that, although these fragments and notes had not been worked out beyond their "idealist" formulation, he had not "abandoned" them and had intended to develop them. In the same conversation, while describing the 1964 Notes as far more complete, he said he got tired of "doing philosophy" and wanted to get back to "literature."[28] All we have of the 1964 Notes is the sketch by R.V. Stone and E.A. Bowman. Nonetheless, a cursory comparison to the 1948 *Morale* shows that, in 1964, Sartre was essentially preoccupied with exactly the same themes of praxis, need, history, violence, society and the meaning of action.

Sartre left other books unfinished because after he had worked out the "method" (philosophy), "anyone could have written them from that point on."[29] But, for Sartre, to leave the content of his ethics unspecified and "unfinished" was inextricably tied to the idea of ethics itself. Stone and Bowman

26. Sonia Kruks, "Sartre's *Cahiers pour une morale*: Failed attempt or a New Trajectory in Ethics?", *Social Text*, No. 13/14 (Winter-Spring '86), pp. 184-94.

27. For an informative preliminary exposition and comments on the Rome Lecture Notes of 1964, see, Robert V. Stone and Elizabeth A. Bowman, "Dialectical Ethics: A First Look at Sartre's Unpublished 1964 Rome Lecture Notes," *Social Text*, 13/14 (Winter-Spring '86), pp. 195-215.

28. S. de Beauvoir, *Entretiens '74*, pp. 234-6.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 215-6; 223-5; 515.

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feel that Sartre remains "disappointingly abstract" by not providing specifics on future socialism and/or "concrete means" to it.[30] However, for Sartre, in distinction to Kantianism and Marxism, values are primary products of praxis and "absolutes" created in "relative" situations.[31] He believed that ethical philosophy "calls for revisions, since it always goes beyond the current epoch."[32] In this context, Sartre defines the "Good" as "all that serves freedom," while "evil" is "all that disserves it."[33]

This later formulation differs little from his "idealist" notes in *Cahiers pour une morale* where "the notion of Good entails a plurality of consciences and also a plurality of commitments (*engagements*)."[34] In the long run, Sartre's lifework equated commitment with the search for a "pure ethics," namely, for a praxis that "would make history" and an "unconditional future" that leaves behind "repetitive morality."[35] Although much sharper by 1964, i.e., after the (two volumes of) *Critique*, the history-ethics connection is already compelling in the 1948 *Morale*: "Thus, the historical agent does without ethics, he ignores it: it is nothing but the purely formal play of relations among legal persons. It surfaces when political action, religious life and History come to a standstill. That is, during periods when abstract law defines the moral person and real History falls outside this definition. This is why it seems useless. But in turn, the concrete goal that the historical agent sets for himself presupposes a certain conception of man and of values; it is impossible to be a pure agent of History without an ideal goal (realism is pure passivity or an over-valuation of History as such). But it is not true either that one can use any means to realize the goal: they would threaten to destroy it. At this point, beyond the antinomy of ethics and History, we can catch a glimpse of a concrete ethics which appears to be *the logic of effective action.*"[36]

With this oblique look back at the conclusion of *L'Etre et le Néant* (man is a "useless passion"), Sartre's message changes. History is worth making just when it seems useless. To "see" through realism is to acknowledge that one's self-accommodation to a "repetitive ethics" has become intolerable. As always, Sartre provides only a guideline and not a blueprint.

Eleni Mahaira-Odoni

30. Stone and Bowman, *p. cit.*, p. 211. The authors are right to stress that Sartre's outlook has nothing to do with "bourgeois pessimism" as alleged in works by Chiodi, Aronson and Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 215, ns. 41-3.

31. *Entretiens '74*, p. 552; Sartre, *Morale*, p. 437.

32. *Entretiens '74*, p. 200.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 552.

34. Sartre, *Morale*, p. 575.

35. Cf. Stone and Bowman, *op. cit.*, for a good discussion on the case of the mothers of "thalidomide babies."

36. Sartre, *Morale*, pp. 110-11. My translation.

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Russell A. Berman. *The Rise of the Modern German Novel: Crisis and Charisma.* Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1986. 311 pages.

The current popularity of the mapping trope, particularly in discussions of postmodernism, might give rise to the impression that the AAA has expanded its sphere of marketability: all those readers lost in the wilderness of Western civilization need a good map to find their way to meaning and, with any luck, to history. Berman dons the cap of cartographer-chauffeur and steers us with great skill on a breathtaking tour through the landscape of the German novel from 1848 to 1947. We are undoubtedly in better hands with Berman than with Allstate. While his impressive study begins, modestly enough, with the assertion that "literature has its geography," we realize fairly quickly that he has in fact undertaken nothing less than an examination of the relationship between literary and economic structures in the historically and nationally specific context of nineteenth-century German liberalism and the ensuing phases of imperialism and monopoly capitalism. This is far more enterprising than a more simplistic study of the traditional dichotomy between art and politics, for Berman is less concerned with merely thematic or mimetic representations of economic issues in literature than he is with the communicative strategies of literary texts themselves. The tightrope walk between economics and aesthetics is perhaps the most difficult one to negotiate in literary studies, and Berman is to be applauded for the consistent integrity with which he pursues the task.

In scrutinizing the changing relationship between the principle of capitalist exchange and the exchange of meaning between text and reader, Berman challenges Adorno's "linear description of an inescapable history of domination" (vi) and addresses what he considers the failure by Theodor W. Adorno, Peter Büger, Walter Benjamin, Leo Löwenthal, and Georg Lukács to provide adequate analysis of the modernist rupture around 1900. Indebted to the principles of reception aesthetics, Berman's literary sociology of German modernism draws furthermore on Max Weber's tripartite analysis of the sociology of religion. The purported tensions between traditionalism and capitalism yield to the Weberian concept of charisma, which Berman finds particularly fruitful for an analysis of the different collective communities invoked by modernist German texts responding to the nineteenth-century failure of bourgeois liberalism and its aesthetic counterpart, bourgeois realism. The realization that bourgeois individuality was no longer a viable option, either in society or in literature, fostered according to Berman three types of German modernism: "fascist modernism, leftist modernism, and a modernism of social individuality" (vii). The fact that Berman studiously eschews, even within a single national context, a monolithic view of modernism is much to his credit.

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As intellectually innovative and rigorous as the Berman guide to Wilhelmine Germany is, one does wonder on occasion about the path not taken. The first chapter, entitled "The Geography of Wilhelmine Culture," presumably prepares us for the main excursion. And yet, if, as Berman immediately maintains, literature has its geography, and, as he soon demonstrates, geography is a function of power relations, it follows that literature is also a function of power relations and not primarily of geography. Why then does Berman lend so much significance to the question of geography? Ostensibly this has to do, first and foremost, with the link he ascertains between the uniform perspective of German realism and the German trend toward national unification after the failed revolution of 1848. This makes eminent sense, but one wishes that Berman had elaborated on exactly what social groups, factors, or experiences are excluded from this unified "realist" perspective. Catholics, Jews, and Socialists are categories mentioned in passing. Are they and other possible sub-groups in fact excluded to the same degree by the same strategies of unification, or are distinctions in order here?

Berman's arguments turn from the political practice and literary form of unification to the ideological veiling implicit in the cultural dichotomy espoused, notably by the novelist Theodor Fontane, between Northern and Southern Germany. Fontane tried to counter the Prussian dominance of the German Empire with images of a Southern utopia (Austria), for, so Berman seems to argue with Fontane, the "facade of social and national homogeneity obscured the continuity of real hierarchy, inequality, and power difference" (8-9). By not going into details here, Berman comes dangerously close to rendering inequality just another trope, indeed of succumbing to the North/South duality that he himself has argued is an ideological foil. He does point out that the geographical dichotomy postulated between the capitalism of the West and the large landownership of the East (*Junkertum*) is no less plausible than the more culturally determined North/South geographical code. With the trend toward national unification, the quality of otherness is projected increasingly onto foreign nations, notably onto the France vanquished in the Franco-Prussian War. "...[T]he new geography underscores the importance of distinctions between insiders and outsiders, natives and foreigners. This dichotomous structure of national identity in turn explains why the crisis of Wilhelmine culture and the emergence of opposition can be traced in the reformulations of the geographic code" (23). Presumably this has to do with the founding of the imperial nation, and yet, Berman stresses capitalist, Eastward expansion over that. How exactly do the two phenomena of nation-building and capitalist expansion relate? Here Berman's argument might have been strengthened by a comparison with the treatment of foreigners and outsiders in German culture prior to 1871.

Finally, at the conclusion of his first chapter, Berman reveals the true purpose underlying his geographical concern with North/South and East/West dualities. It has in fact paved the way for Berman's assertion that Weber's third term, charisma, "transcends the limits of the binary code" (24). This transcend-

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ence of the binary code comes as such welcome relief to the reader wary of binary polarities, especially when applied to socio-cultural contexts, that s/he may not notice that Berman has not fully prepared the case for the necessity of such transcendence in the context of his particular undertaking. Given that most of the arguments of the first chapter move along a North/South or an East/West axis, the concluding assertion of a third, charismatic way seems somewhat more contrived than it is convincing, especially if one considers that the charismatic community, as elaborated by Berman, implies its own polar opposite, i.e. nineteenth-century individuality. One wishes that Berman had brought as much clarity and congency to bear on his choice of Weberian charisma as the ultimate breaker of the binary code as he does in the ensuing chapters on nineteenth-century realism, which he charactertizes as the foil "against which modernism constantly defines itself" (54).

Berman lays the groundwork for his particular treatment of the works of Gustav Freytag, Adalbert Stifter, Theodor Fontane, and Georg Hermann in a chapter on "Realism and Commodities." After 1848, he argues, "the discourse of unity" continued but without its earlier ties to emancipatory politics. "The program of national unification as the suppression of political and social particularity finds its aesthetic corollary in the realist preference for the totalizing forms of grand epics" (63). Berman centers his critical attention on the status of literary detail as a textual commodity in the economy of exchange of meaning between novelistic text and implied reader. The shifting dialectics of this economy in turn affect that status of readers as either creators or victims of social reality. In its early stages, Berman contends, realism evoked readers as active participants in the hermeneutic unfolding of a text and hence of reality; the success of this project relied on a certain homogeneity of the reading public and its social assumptions and aspirations. As the internal contradictions of bourgeois culture began to explode in the second half of the nineteenth century, the realist paradigm found itself in crisis (78).

It is refreshing to follow Berman's finely honed differentiations among various thrusts of late nineteenth-century German realism. One is forced to think in terms of poetic realism. Breaking with the tradition of literary scholarship, Berman cites, not Gottfried Keller's *Grüner Heinrich*, but Gustav Freytag's more overtly political *Soll und Habern* (1855) as "the epitome of bourgeois thought in its transformation from liberalism to imperialism" (79). While both Freytag and Stifter, author of *Der Nachsommer* (1857), posit an economy of detail intended to counter unrestrained capitalist acquisitiveness, the realist details in Freytag's text still function "as signs of meaning in the discursive interchange between author and reader" (91). Stifter's descriptivism, on the other hand, lends itself to "an authoritarian postivism" that contributes to the powerlessness of the implied reader. One might wish to ponder one or two questions in the context of these chapters. For one thing, what exactly is meant by the exchange of meaning between text and reader? If it is indeed an exchange, what does the reader bring to it? What distinctions, if any, must be made between implied and empirical readers? Can the ex-

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change of commodities be equated with the textual exchange of meaning? Furthermore, given Berman's discussion of Freytag's anti-Semitism portrayal of Jews as representatives of excessive capitalism, one would like to know how Berman's generally comprehensive analysis of a century of German literature would account for the phenomenon of anti-Semitism in German novels. This question seems particularly intriguing inasmuch as anti-Semitism is not only common to both traditionalism and capitalism but to the third category of charismatic community as well. Can we still speak of a transcendence of the binary code in light of that?

A most glaring omission with regard to specific structures of inequality in the novels discussed throughout the book is the economic and cultural status of women in Wilhelmine Germany. There are indeed many indications in the text that Berman is more sensitive than most to the issue of misogyny and the politics of gender. He neglects, however, to incorporate these critical insights into the overall structure of his fundamental argument. Only a single woman author is mentioned in this entire study of numerous texts by male authors, and even that mention is made only in passing (Marieluise Fleisser, p. 234). No consideration is, for example, given to writers such as Fanny Lewald, Franziska zu Reventlow, Lou Andreas Salomé, or Gertrud Kolmar. Empirical women figure predominantly as the wife-biographer and the mother of Max Weber, while the female characters in the novels discussed are analyzed occasionally but not consistently in terms of gender politics (see especially p. 7). Berman's partial blindness to the issue of gender in German modernism's response to the crisis of bourgeois individuality is all the more disturbing given his stated concern for the *exchange* of meaning between reader and text. Berman is undoubtedly aware that women have comprised an increasingly large segment of the German reading public since the Enlightenment. Why, one wonders, does he not address the gender-specific implications of textual strategies of communication for women as implied and/or empirical readers? The structural foundation for his analysis of the modernist crisis of Wilhelmine culture implicitly presupposes that all readers of literature, be they real or invoked, are men. This is one detour which our cartographer-guide would have been well advised to take.

As Berman perceives it, Fontanes' novelistic work, written some thirty years after *Soll und Haben*, is characterized by a subjectivism "counterposed to the apparent disorder of an objectivity rent by class struggle" (140). The detail no longer speaks for itself (there is no social guarantee for the homogeneity of literary meaning) but functions instead as symbolism, *bestowing* meaning rather than inherently possesing it. Berman notes a subsequent dual development, whereby modernist writers seek to rescue the "authentic content" of bourgeois culture and "realism itself collapses into the trivial novels of inevitability and submission that characterize the culture industry of the twentieth century" (160). The novels of Georg Hermann serve Berman as examples of this latter tendency toward the reification of realism. "The demise of exchange as a viable trope within both literary rhetoric and social ideology has a cor-

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ollary in the communicative relationship between author and reader" (175). Hermann's authoritarian narrator, Berman maintains, dictates meaning rather than helping the reader to uncover it, thus creating an "absolute dependence on the narrator" (177). How then, one wonders, does this allow for Berman's own critical reading of the novel? To be sure, the point he is out to make is that the culture of reified realism becomes "a crucial mechanism for social stability in the age of imperialism" (178). Berman's own voice is authoritative without being authoritarian.

The charismatic novels of Robert Musil, Hermann Hesse, and Elias Canetti indicate to Berman the inclination to escape from alienation and to reject the nineteenth-century liberal individualism that fostered it (182). (This explains by the way of ghost of Wilhelm Meister that wanders through the pages of Berman's study.) This abdication necessitates a qualitatively different understanding of cultural community, one which posits a collectivity "outside the logic of market exchange" (195). As Berman sees it, "modernism is political not primarily in its occasional themes but in its mode of address, and the competing forms of modernism correspond to alternative political projects" (204). Hans Grimm's *Volk ohne Raum* (1926) and Ernst Jünger's *Auf den Marmorklippen* (1939) serve as representative examples of fascist modernism, texts that address a fascist collective. "The reader is invoked no longer as the agent of a hermeneutic penetration but as the locus of a double passivity, determined by the knowledge of the race inherited from the past and by the duty of the present in the preservation of the collective" (206). The primary principles of literary rhetoric and representation at work here are, as Berman demonstrates, iteration and the spectacular image. Fascist modernism celebrates the inevitability of helplessness where bourgeois realism only recognized it. "Destruction is inescapable, and it is fated to recur repeatedly," rendering it "useless to consider avoiding the holocaust that awaits" (223). Here again, one wishes that Berman would differentiate among the different potential and empirical readers of the same texts. Surely a Jew reading *Auf den Marmorklippen* in 1939 was less likely than a Nazi to celebrate the ineluctability of destruction.

Although leftist modernism, as exemplified in the works of Alfred Döblin, Oskar Maria Graf, and Walter Benjamin, shares with fascist modernism an operative approach to art and a rejection of bourgeois individuality, it invokes according to Berman a collectivized speaker, not a mute collective. "This vocalized community is as antithetical to privacy as the fascist folk, but it is precisely the opposite of the pacified victims of the fascist spectacle" (242). Where fascist modernism affirms the absence of change through the principle of iteration, leftist modernism stresses the shortcomings of what is repeated by developing an exemplary narrative in which the readers are supposed to learn what the characters do not. "The leftist antihero must consequently be a passive agent in order to preserve the space in which the invocation of the reader can take place" (250). Leftist modernism thereby refuses, in contrast to bourgeois aesthetics and fascist modernism, the resolution of difference (251-2).

Berman's final chapter, devoted to the modernism of Thomas Mann, is cru-

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cial for the defense of his thesis of crisis and charisma. As he points out, canonized modernism (Mann, Kafka, Gide, Proust, Joyce, and Beckett) does not fit into his categories of overtly political modernisms, be they fascist or leftist. "But if the charismatic thesis failed to address the literary projects of this central grouping, then it could hardly be presented as a plausible sociology of modernism: (262). Traditionally, Kafka and Mann are seen as either apolitical or politically elitist. Berman issues a bold challenge to these categorizations by claiming that Thomas Mann's novels invoke a charismatic, political collective. "Superficial elitism is inverted into democratic politics" (263). This will be a rocky road for most readers of Thomas Mann to follow; they may fall by the wayside before they have traveled far enough to see Thomas Mann as the man of the people. According to Berman, for example, the waiter Mario embodies the alternative to a fascist collective in the novella "Mario and the Magician." Mario is allegedly characterized by "unmitigated servitude" and "no interiority" (267). He does not associate with the rest of the working class but appears "as the servant who has nothing to lose but his isolation and servitude" (268). Berman's contention that Mann desires a collective that preserves individualism (in contrast to fascist and leftist modernism) without reverting to the bourgeois version of individuality relies here, at least in part, on the assertion that Mario's act of resistance is socially not privately motivated. It could, however, be more convincingly argued that Mario acts in defense precisely of that private, interior space which Berman alleges he does not have. This may seem to be mere quibbling over details of interpretation, but it in fact underscores Berman's own operative approach to textual detail. Many of his analysis of literary details, with which he supports his main theses, are quite compelling, even striking, but the degree of cogency is not always consistent. Berman does not burden us with an excess of detail, for which we should thank him but that means in turn that readers unfamiliar with the primary texts cited are forced to take Berman at his word. This may be true of any number of literary studies, but particular caution is advised where only a select few textual details are asked to bear the weight of such ponderous conclusions as inform Berman's project.

The challenge Berman poses to the traditional reading of Adrian Leverkühn as the diabolic totalitarian musician in *Doctor Faustus* (1947) is, on the other hand, very convincing, as is his designation of the bourgeois freedom embodied by Serenus Zeitblom as ineffectual. Where Berman notes iteration in fascist modernism and the exemplary in leftist modernism, he ascertains "structures of seriality" (279) in Thomas Mann's oeuvre. All three modernisms, he maintains, challenge "the liberal nineteenth-century faith in unbroken development" (280). Comparable to leftist modernism, the trope of ambivalence in Mann's texts refuses to resolve conflicts, thereby opening a door to "dramatic dialogue with the recipient, who is urged into a critical stance vis-à-vis the text" (283). Unfortunately Berman's contention that *Doctor Faustus* elaborates "an aesthetics which anticipates community" (286) and that Mann desires "an integration of social concerns into art" (277) is not as successfully

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grounded in historical and economic developments as his earlier discussion of realism and the overtly political modernisms. His elaboration of the political communities invoked by fascist and leftist modernisms have led us to expect more substantive conjectures as to the political community anticipated by Thomas Mann. Berman does not exactly ignore but neither does he, for example, stress the class bias informing Mann's notion of collective.

Wise enough to acknowledge that all modernisms are "insufficient to transform society alone" and hence "always incomplete" (286), Berman recognizes the limitations of literature without renouncing the socio-political thrust and impact it does have. His aim is not to reify modernist strategies of the early twentieth century, for, as he has argued with sustained eloquence and erudition, "the question of modernism is ultimately not purely formal; it is a question of translating aesthetic innovation into strategies of societal emancipation, and until that project is achieved, modernism and its charismatic promises remain the order of the day" (286). The informed insistence on linking cultural and economic structures of domination and strategies of liberation makes this book a must read for anyone interested in nineteenth- and twentieth-century German culture and society. Berman demonstrates above all that he is a master of his art and that all art, even that which invokes a passive reader, is open to the critical scrutiny of an autonomous reader. You are all heartily encouraged to embark on the Berman guided tour of the modern German novel. You will marvel at much more than novelistic peaks, and you will never be bored. For your comfort and safety, you are advised to ask your guide to slow down around the sharp curves. And be sure not to sit in the back seat.

Leslie A. Adelson

Ernst Bloch, *Briefe: 1903-1975*, (Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt: 1985), 2 vol., 964pp.

Bloch's correspondence, published the year of his hundredth birthday, evokes a period of German philosophy which today seems forever gone. In exile in Switzerland at the outbreak of WWI, Czechoslovakia and the United States during the Nazi period and in both Germanies after 1945, Bloch epitomized an extraordinary symbiosis of the Jewish and the German spirits. Benjamin, Adorno, and Bloch were assimilated Jews unaware of their identity (or difference) except through the disdainful look of others. They

* Originally published as "L'Exil et l'Espérance. La Correspondance d'Ernst Bloch," in *Critique*, (May 1986), pp. 539-545. Translated by Camilla R. Nielsen

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saw themselves primarily within the tradition of German philosophy. In German Idealism and, above all, in Schelling and in the Kabbalah, Bloch discovered the theology of immanence in the tradition of Isaac Luria and Jakob Boehme.

Bloch's correspondence is impressive in that it includes, among others, letters to Lukács, Kracauer, Benjamin, Adorno, Klemperer, and Hermann Broch. Yet this is deceiving: these relations were to a lesser or greater degree strained. Bloch's correspondence is not of the caliber of Benjamin's and cannot be seen as an integral part of his oeuvre. It does, however, document intellectual friendships throughout a century of turmoil.

The first exchange, no doubt the most significant, is between Bloch and Lukács who, with Kracauer were Simmel's students in Berlin in 1910. Before he completed *Spirit of Utopia*, Bloch elaborated a "system" or a "compendium of axiomatic philosophy" in seven volumes which he never published as such. At the same time, Lukács was publishing some of his most acclaimed essays, e.g., *The Soul and the Forms*, *The Poverty of the Spirit*, the *Heidelberg Aesthetic* and *The Theory of the Novel*. Bloch's reactions to Lukács' essays show how strongly the former was influenced by the latter (all of the letters written by Lukács were lost). At the end of his life, Lukács said himself that the influence was mutual. It was Lukács who made Bloch turn away from his systematic works[2] and inspired him to deal with contemporary issues, as exemplified by *Spirit of Utopia*, in spite of all its metaphysical aspirations.

Bloch's "compendium" was intended as a systematic metaphysics in the style of German Idealism. At the time, he was intrigued by the idea of returning to "Catholicism" as a radical transcendence of protestantism, to a real morality. In 1911, Lukács, whom Bloch called the "absolute genius of morality" in *Spirit of Utopia* (1918), proposed a system of ethical "castes" and a Kierkegaardian distinction between social morality and a morality of the self only answerable to God.

At the end of October 1911, the 26-year old Bloch presented Lukács the essence of his "compendium": "Georg, I assure you that all people in Russia and here in the West will in a certain sense feel taken by the hand, will weep and be moved and delivered by the great idea uniting everything; (...) errance will end, everything will be filled by a warm, and ultimately ardent, clarity; man will be sound in body, sure of his technical means and will have a solid notion of the state, a great architecture and dramaturgy, and everyone will be able to serve and pray anew, and the power of my faith will be

1. Georg Lukács, *Philosophie der Kunst* , 1912-14. Cf. Rainer Rochlitz, *Le Jeune Lukács* (Paris: Payot, 1983).

2. He did not take this up again until the later part of his life, notably in *Experimentum Mundi*; cf. Gérard Raulet, *Humanisation de la Nature, Naturalisation de l'homme - Ernst Bloch ou le projet d'une autre rationalité*, (Kinsieck, 1982). Arno Münster, *Figures de l'Utopie dans la Pensée de Bloch* (Aubier, 1985).

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taught to all. They will be embraced, even in the smallest hours of daily life and will rejoice under the protection of a new childhood and youth of myth, a new Middle Age and a reencounter with eternity. I am the Paraclete and the people to whom I have been sent will experience and themselves comprehend the return of God" (vol.I, pp.66-67)

Bloch's expressionist exaltation cavalierly disregards the neo-Kantianism of the time which Lukács accepted, while seeking to illuminate it from inside philosophy of history. In 1913 Bloch wrote several hundred pages of *The World and its Truth as a Utopian Issue* while he was reading Lukács' *Philosophy of Art*. He then wrote an essay on *Don Quixote*, a subject also dealt with by Lukács in *The Theory of the Novel*. Apparently, Lukács recommended this book to Bloch who in turn recognized himself in the main character.

Where did Bloch and Lukács converge at the time? Both refused to accept the limits imposed by transcendental philosophy and the neo-Kantianism of Lask and Weber who both taught at Heidelberg. Lukács, however, rejected them with greater scruples than Bloch. The "Utopia" they both spoke of implied the transgression of these limits. For Lukács the absolute is first only accessible in artistic appearance. The "system of utopian reality" is the sphere of art. In his ethics, he seeks to again question the restrictions imposed by the Kantian "imperative" The philosophy of history then intervenes, pronouncing the end of the bourgeois era and its formal ethics. The ethics of virtue is characterized by non-psychological intersubjectivity and an immediate knowledge of the other. In a mystical sense, Lukács introduced an ethics incompatible with a philosophy of consciousness.

Lukács' thinking is a reflection on the movement towards "living essence" (the tragic transcendence of empirical life). It is a reflection on the "leap" of the empirical individual to a work beyond him and detached from him. In historical terms, Lukács reflects on the end of the novel as symbolizing a limit of the "age of perfect culpability" and the appearance of a new ethos of non-reified relations among men delivered from the world of conventions. The revolutionary break is also with the economic system of reification. Once the break is complete —contrary to Bloch who always remained on the threshold of hope— Lukács justifies and consolidates it to prove the possibility of "essential life" in immanence.

In Bloch's work, Utopia, a never exhausted ontological possibility based on the principle of hope, remains constant, never depending on a specific historical analysis; an a priori that transcends the social and human domain. According to Lukács, art satisfies the desire of accomplishment and serves theory (most evident in realism). Bloch sees aesthetic utopia and social utopia as one and the same thing. They are different expressions of the same ontological order: latent creativity of an inwardness which later becomes matter. For Bloch both art and philosophy are anticipations of possibilities portending a state of being that will support transcendental

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imagination. From the realization of social utopia, Bloch awaits only the creation of conditions conducive to the realization of aesthetic and spiritual utopia, the encounter of the self in the we, the "obscurity of the moment experienced," the appearance of the "topos of the unformulable question." The transformation of society aims at enabling an unfolding of metaphysical activities and an elucidation of spiritual enigmas. Thus, Bloch only has to adapt to external conditions. For him the present is always the "not-yet."

Lukács, on the contrary, changes in accordance with the perspectives opened by history. He looks for real life, understanding it as realization and not just as anticipation. If utopia can be translated into reality, life in history, if society can have a meaning as concrete as that of art, then man must dedicate body and soul to this end and leave behind aesthetic appearance. Lukács rigidly associates norm and history. Paradoxically, Bloch also associates them rigidly, even regarding matter as the source of all possibility, but he is able to eschew compromise (no historical event can contradict Utopia). This is because the not-yet is not by necessity related to historical facts. Thus, Bloch is able to remain true to the utopia of his youth and retains the vigor of the eternally young man. In reality, Bloch's utopia is as atemporal as a fairy tale; as a story teller Bloch is unequalled.

The "transcendent" notion in Bloch's utopia enabled him to understand certain phenomena of artistic modernity that Lukács was never able to grasp.

The second major exchange in Bloch's correspondence was with Kracauer. Never would Bloch be as close to Benjamin or to Adorno as he was to him. Kracauer nonetheless openly criticized Bloch's *Thomas Münzer*. In 1926, Bloch resumed relations with him after he had published a critical article on the Buber/Rosenzweig Bible translation.[3] Bloch and Kracauer discussed Lukács' work *History and Class Consciousness*. Kracauer, who had been influenced by *The Theory of the Novel*, as can be seen from his *Kriminalroman,* tried to emphasize the differences between Lukács on the one hand and Benjamin and Bloch, on the other. He stressed the "idealistic" and "formalistic" strain of Lukács' Marxism, its lack of praxis (compared to Bloch's and Benjamin's analyses). Kracauer aimed at disclosing the full content of profane truth in theological traditions and marginal, occult phenomena so as to enhance the disenchantment of the world (e.g., *Ornaments of the Masses*. Like Bloch, Kracauer wanted to unveil and at once conserve mythological and theological meanings (I, p. 281).

Counter to Lukács, Kracauer anticipated a recent development by discrediting theory in the name of literature. Adorno was satisfied with a paradoxical self-denunciation of the concept that a philosophy of history radically abandons the concrete, the micrological interpretation of phenomena, and leads to the loss of all conceptual structure. Referring to his novel, *Genêt*, Kracauer wrote: "Neither pacifism nor communism but rather the

3. This polemic was inspired by Benjamin.

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apology of a disassociated world manifested in the awareness of death" (vol.I, p.290)

Benjamin and Kracauer inspired Bloch to write essays and literary texts, culminating in *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* . Here, Bloch refused to surrender myth and imagination to nationalist ideology. Benjamin saw in this book a plagiarization of his most profound intuitions.

Bloch's isolation in America, the philosophy chair in Leipzig and his teaching position in Tübingen, where he fled in 1961, mark the epoch of the system. Bloch returned to the "compendium" project he conceived in his youth. From now on, he would speak of it as his "encyclopedia" (vol. II, p. 716). It compromised *Principle of Hope, Natural Law of Human Dignity, Atheism in Christianity* and *Experimentum Mundi*.

All these letters are interspersed with numerous and occasionally amusing anecdotes. At a very young age Bloch was obsessed with the idea of finding a rich woman who would enable him to dedicate himself to philosophy. He rivaled Lukács in acquiring antique furniture and bickered with him over money. At one point, Lukács even accused him that he was not living up to his own moral philosophy. After his first wife died, he expressed strange ideas and high-minded feelings. His relationship to Benjamin and Adorno was extremely strained, culminating in the devastating letter on the *Philosophy of Music* at the time Bloch was teaching in Leipzig. The political solidarity of exiles led to discussions which today seem obsolete and sometimes not very lucid. In New York, Bloch had his friends believe that he had to give up philosophy for exacting manual labor twenty-four hours a day.

Bloch's thinking was driven by the opacity of subjectivity in modernity. He stands in the post-Hegelian tradition of the "dialectic of reason". He constantly retraced the path leading from "within-the-self" to the "for the self". We exist anonymously and are not in touch with ourselves. We have lost touch with immediacy. Eschatological hope is the motor of this never-ending truly aporetical process. This principle has held up against empirical falsification, making Bloch immune to the skepticism of his younger colleagues. Inspite of its inflexibility, the quasi-transcendental character of this principle, which did not succumb to economic reductionism, enabled Bloch to live through this century "upright", imbued with an invincible notion of human dignity.

Rainer Rochlitz

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John Fekete editor, *The Structural Allegory: Reconstructive Encounters with the New French Thought*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), $29.50, pp. vii +269.

The Structural Allegory is an important contribution to the evaluation of both structuralist and post-structuralist French social theory. What is particularly exciting about this volume is that the ten contributors represent a disciplinary breadth that is as far reaching as the impact of the new French thought itself. In addition, several authors (D'Amico, O'Neill, Levin, and Fekete) challenge directly the structuralist and post-structuralist failure to address the historicity of social formations. the constitutive dimension of human agency, and domination. However, all the contributors argue convincingly that post-structuralism has something to offer through its anti-empiricist and anti-rationalist framework that brings into question the presuppositions of western epistemology. Those who have struggled with Barthes, Foucault and Derrida but have retreated from the onslaught of opaque language will certainly find this volume to be an accessible guide.

Two of the essays, by Castoriadis and Baudrillard, have appeared elsewhere but are offered here for the first time in English. Castoriadis criticizes the formalism of early structuralists and semioticians and plots an alternative route to the constitution of social formations through the "social Imaginary." While tied to representations, the latter is not reducible to the signifier and signified. Rather, it refers to the human potential to create. Hence, Castoriadis faults the Marxist tradition in terms of its Hegelian origins, for being seized by the teleology of reason. Like Castoriadis, Baudrillard criticizes the formalism of structuralism and semiotics but advocates blowing the breath of historicity into the process of human representation. Baudrillard's point of leverage is to compare the use of the concept of value in Saussure and Marx. He argues that structuralism and Marxism have emphasized the exchange value of signs to the neglect of their multivocality. Thus, he proposes historicizing signs by understanding social transformations in terms of their codes. In defense of the logocentrism of the Marxist and neo-Marxist traditions, it is not clear in either Castoriadis or Baudrillard how the social imaginary or the historicity of the signification process are concretely connected to human praxis and the social constraints to which human objectification, whether in language or labor, are subject. Because of this, we are left with the possibility of a reified constitutive process that in the extreme mirrors only itself.

One of the more interesting issues raised in *The Structural Allegory* is the debate between Foucault and Derrida over Foucault's interpretation in his *Madness and Civilization* of a key passage from Descartes. Foucault in his own assault on western rationalism takes Descartes to task for excluding those

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who are considered mad from the rationality of discourse. Foucault reads the text of Descartes's exclusion of madness from philosophical discourse as reflecting the confinement of madness. Derrida argues, to the contrary, that the very possibility of talking about history demands the victory of reason over unreason. For Derrida, the historical understanding of a text means that one must examine exhaustively the discourse of the text itself. The deconstructivist move by Derrida takes a view of texts not merely as representations, that is, pointing to something outside themselves, but rather as a form of production having its own internal play. One is reminded here of Bakhtin's plea for a theory of discourse and textuality as production. Derrida concludes that Foucault has blinded himself to the play of the text by introducing philosophical problematics that are external to the text. Foucault's response, which has laid the groundwork for the debate, is to argue that Derrida is supporting the autonomy of philosophical discourse. In other words, for Foucault, philosophical discussion and argumentation has its basis in history.

This debate is important because it raises the question as to what is involved in the critical reading of a text, whether in literature or the arena of human action taken as a text. One essay in the volume, that by Levin, argues that Derrida has merely reversed the logocentric dichotomy between speech and writing which in the end dismembers speech. According to Levin, deconstruction contributes to language's self-apotheosization while bracketing history and society from understanding and critique. On the other hand, in an article that compares Foucault and Parsons, Kroker argues that Foucault is a hyperstructuralist in that he has failed to localize the categories of knowledge and power which, he asserts, are always representational in social class. The consensus of these critical readings of post-structuralists, also reflected in essays by Markus and Wernick, is that textual exegesis must concretely situate human representation in its historical and cultural context; one that recognizes that representations owe their origin to human practical activity and its specific constraints of power. As Paul Ricoeur has remarked with respect to the work of Levi-Strauss, to eliminate the external representations of signs to the privileging of a text's internal architecture or play would be to create a senseless necrology of meaning. Ricoeur's comment, if one accepts the critical commentary of *The Structural Allegory*, equally applies to the post-structuralist movement.

The structuralist and post-structuralist movements receive an historical accounting in an essay by Angenot who relates how Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, a reconstruction from students' notes, initially made an impact in the Soviet Union rather than France. Saussure became a major departure point for Russian formalism and did not touch French soil until after the Second World War and then through the influence of Jakobson, Greimas, Hjelmslev, and Levi-Strauss returning from the United States. Despite the continual citation of Saussure in France, Angenot claims that

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the French reading of the noted linguist was superficial. Most of all, Angenot argues that the French were unaware of the Soviet critiques of Saussure such as in the work of Bakhtin. For Angenot, structuralism has only provided a rallying point for French scholarship against common enemies such as positivism and Stalinist Marxism. It was never, Angenot concludes, meant to be an epistemology —a point which takes us back to structuralism's rejection of the human subject and the critical self-reflection of our own Enlightenment heritage.

Although the essays of *The Structural Allegory* fault the post-structuralist movement for insufficiently developing a notion of critique as the critical theory of society, the reader is left uncertain as to where to turn to seize the possible emancipatory potentials of post-structuralism. John O'Neill, claiming that post-structuralism fails to link literary emancipation to social emancipation, poses Habermas, Foucault, Bourdieu, and Friere as alternatives. Yet O'Neill says no more about this diverse group as an alternative other than that they all link discourse analysis to an interest in emancipation. However, surely Habermas, who in his transcendental pragmatics of language retains much of the epistemological and praxis traditions critiqued by post-structuralism, leads us in a different direction than Foucault whose discourses of humanity seize only on human action as a conduit. Rather than fault the linguistic turn in social theory, as do many of the contributors to the volume, it would have been instructive to see an effort made to reformulate language as communicative interaction or social praxis in a way that accounts for the social inequalities of interlocuters as well as their historicity.

The Structural Allegory should be read not only by those interested in the breadth of the structuralist and post-structuralist movements but also by those who appreciate the alternative that discourse and textuality provide to analytic, empiricist and positivist traditions in the social sciences and humanities. Even though the argument against rationalism and the economistic reading of Marx could have been stronger in these essays, the point is well made that post-structuralism has something valuable to offer the interpretive sciences especially if it can redefine its field to incorporate history, praxis, and social emancipation.

Robert C. Ulin

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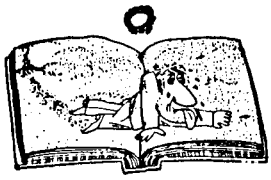

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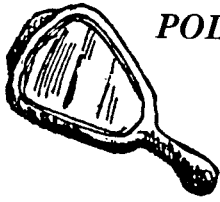

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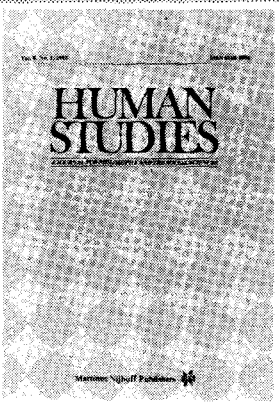

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